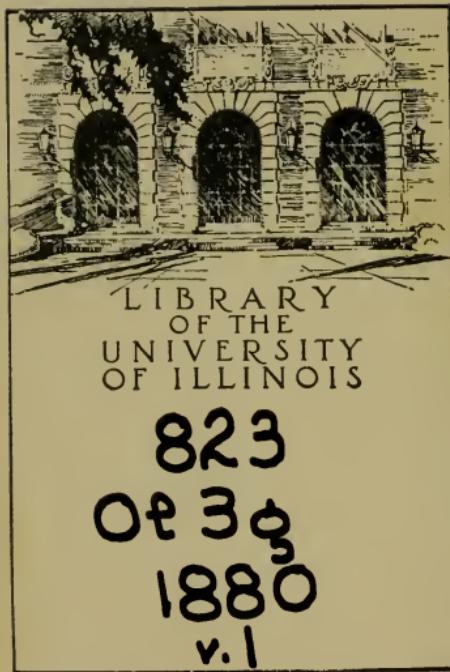






181 vols

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THE
GREATEST HEIRESS IN ENGLAND.
—
VOL. I.

THE GREATEST HEIRESS IN ENGLAND.

BY
MRS. OLIPHANT

AUTHOR OF
“The Chronicles of Carlingford,”
&c., &c.

“A lady richly left
An unlessoned girl, unschooled, unpractised:
Happy in this, she is not yet so old
But she may learn.”—*Merchant of Venice*.

IN THREE VOLUMES.
VOL. I.

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THE
GREATEST HEIRESS IN ENGLAND.

CHAPTER I.

NO. 6 IN THE TERRACE.

A COUNTRY town, quiet, simple, and dull, chiefly of old construction, but with a few new streets and scattered villas of modern flimsiness, a river flowing through it, dulled and stilled with the frost; trees visible in every direction, blocking up the horizon and making a background, though only with a confused anatomy of bare branches, to the red houses; not many people about the streets, and these cold, subdued, only brightening a little with

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the idea that if the frost “held” there might be skating to-morrow. On one side the High Street trended down a slight slope towards the river, on the other ran vaguely away into a delta of small streets, which in their turn led to the common, on the edge of which lay the new district of Farafield. All towns it is said have a tendency to stray and expand themselves towards the west, and this is what had happened here. The little new streets, roads, crescents, and places, all strayed towards the setting sun. The best and biggest of these, and at the same time the furthest off of all, was the Terrace, a somewhat gloomy row of houses, facing towards the common, and commanding across the strip of garden which kept them in dignified seclusion from the road, a full view of the broken expanse of gorse and heather over which the sunsets played, affording to these monotonous windows a daily spectacle far more splendid than any official pomp. There were but twelve of these houses, ambitiously built to look like one great “Elizabethan mansion.” Except one or two

large, old-fashioned, substantial houses in the Market Place, these were the largest and most pretentious dwellings in the town; the proud occupants considered the pile as a very fine specimen of modern domestic architecture, and its gentility was undoubted. It was the landlord's desire that nobody who worked for his or her living should enter these sacred precincts. It is difficult to keep so noble a resolution in a country where so many occupations which are not conspicuous to the common eye, live and grow; but still it was an exalted aim.

In this town there was a street, and in this street there was a house, and in this house there was a room—After this fairy-tale fashion we may be permitted to begin this history. The house which was called No. 6 in the Terrace, was in no way remarkable externally among its neighbours; but within the constitution of the family was peculiar. The nominal master of the house was a retired clerk of the highest respectability, with his equally respectable wife.

But it was well known that this excellent couple existed (in the Terrace) merely as ministers to the comfort of an old man who inhabited the better part of the house, and whose convenience was paramount over all its other arrangements. There was a link of relationship, it was understood, between the Fords and old Mr. Trevor, and though there was no great disparity of social condition between them, yet there was the great practical difference that old Trevor was very rich, and the Fords had no more than sufficient for their homely wants—wants much more humble than those of the ordinary residents in the Terrace, who were the *élite* of the town. This gave a tone of respect to their intercourse on one side, and a kind of superiority on the other. The Fords were of the opinion that old Mr. Trevor had greatly the best of the bargain. He had none of the troubles of a house upon his shoulders, and he had all its advantages. The domestic arrangements which cost Mrs. Ford so much thought, cost him nothing but money; he had no care, no annoy-

ance about anything, neither taxes to pay nor servants to look after ; and everything went on like clockwork ; his tastes were considered in every way, and all things made subservient to him. When coals or meat rose in value, or when one of the three servants (each more troublesome than the other, as it is the nature of maids to be) was disagreeable, what did it matter to old Mr. Trevor ? And when that question arose about the Borough rate, what had he to say to it ? Nothing, absolutely nothing ! all this daily burden was on the shoulders of Richard Ford and Susan his wife ; whereas Mr. Trevor had nothing to do but to put his hand into his pocket, to some people the easiest exercise ! He had the best of everything, the chief rooms, and the most unwearied attendance ; and not only for him but for his two children, who were a still more anxious charge, as Mrs. Ford expressed it, was every good thing provided. Sometimes the excellent couple grumbled, and sometimes felt it hard that being relations there should be so much difference ; but on the whole both

parties were aware that their own comforts profited by the conjunction, and the household machinery worked smoothly, with as few jars and as much harmony as is possible to man.

At the time this history begins Mr. Trevor was seated in the drawing-room, the best room in the house. The Fords occupied the front parlour below, where the furniture was moderate and homely; but all the skill of the upholsterer had been displayed above. The room had two long windows looking out over the common, not at this moment a very cheerful prospect. There was nothing outside but mist and dampness, made more dismal by incipient frost, and full of the sentiment of cold, a chill that went to your heart. The prospect inside was not much adapted to warm or cheer in such circumstances. The windows were cut down to the floor, as is usual in suburban houses, and though the draught had been shut out as much as possible by list and stamped leather, and by the large rugs of silky white fur which lay in front

of each window, yet there were still little impertinent whiffs of air blowing about. And the moral effect was still more chilly. It was not an artistic room according to the fashion of the present day, or one indeed in which any taste to speak of had been shown. The walls were white with gilded ornaments, the curtains were blue, the carpet showed large bouquets of flowers upon a light ground. There were large prints, very large, and not very interesting, royal marriages and christenings hanging, one in the centre of each wall. Thus it will be seen there was nothing to distinguish it from a hundred other unremarkable and unattractive apartments of the ordinary British kind. A large folding screen was disposed round the door to keep out the draught, and the folding doors which led into Mr. Trevor's bedroom behind, were veiled with curtains of the same blue as those of the windows. The old man was seated by a large fire in a comfortable easy-chair with a writing-table within reach of his hand. Mr. Trevor was not a man of imposing presence; he was little

and very thin, wrapped in a dark coloured dressing-gown with a high collar in which he seemed pilloried, and a brown wig which imparted a very aged juvenility to his small and wrinkled face. Grey hairs harmonize and soften wrinkles ; but the smooth chin and bright brown locks of this little old man gave him a somewhat elfish appearance, something like that of an elderly bird. He sat with a pen in his hand making notes upon a large document opened out upon the writing-table, and his action and a little unconscious chirp to which he gave vent now and then, increased his resemblance to an alert sparrow. And indeed it might have been a claw which Mr. Trevor was holding up with a quill in it, and his little air of triumphant success and self-content, his head held on one side, and the dab he made from time to time upon his paper gave him very much the air of a sparrow. He had laid down his “Times” which hung in a much crumpled condition, like a table-cover, over a small round table on his other hand, in order to make this sudden note whatever it might be,

and as he made it he chuckled. The paper on which he wrote was large blue paper like that employed by lawyers, and had an air of formality and importance. It was smoothed out over a big blotting-book, not long enough quite to contain it, and had a dog's-ear at the lower corner, which proved a frequent recurrence on the part of the writer to this favourite manuscript. When he had written all that occurred to him, Mr. Trevor put down his pen and resumed the "Times;" but the interest of the previous occupation carried the day even over that invaluable newspaper, which is as good as a trade to idle persons. He had not gone down a column before he paused, rested his paper on his knee, and chuckled again. Then he leant over the writing-table and read the note he had made, which was tolerably long; then with his "Times" in his hand, rose and went to the door, losing himself behind the screen. There he stood for a moment, wrapping his dressing-gown around his thin legs with a shiver, and called for "Ford! Ford!" Presently a reply came, muffled by the

distance, from the room below. "I've put in another clause," the old man called over the stair.

Ford below opened the door of his parlour to listen.

"Bless me! have you indeed, Mr. Trevor?" he replied, with less enthusiasm.

"Come up, come up, and you shall hear it," said the other, fidgetting with excitement. Then he returned to his easy-chair, laughing to himself under his breath. He bent over the document and read it again. "They'll keep her straight, they'll keep her straight among them," he said to himself. "She'll be clever if she goes wrong after all this," and then he sat down again, chuckling and tucking the "Times" like a napkin over his knees.

All this time he had not been alone; but his companion was not one who claimed much notice. There was spread before the fire a large milky white rug, like those that stopped the draught from the windows; and upon this, half buried in the fur, lay a small boy in knickerbockers, ab-

sorbed in a book. The child was between seven and eight; he was dressed in a blue velveteen suit, somewhat shabby. He was small even for his small age. His face was a little pale face, with fair and rather lanky locks. Sometimes he would lie on his back with his book supported upon his chest—sometimes the other way, with the book on the rug, and his head a little raised, leaning on his hands. This was his attitude at present; he took no notice of his father, nor his father of him; he was a kind of postscript to old Mr. Trevor's life; no one had expected him, no one had wanted him; when he chose to come into the world it was at his own risk, so to speak. He had been permitted to live, and had been called John, a good, safe, serviceable name, but no special encouragement of any other kind had been given to him, to pursue the thankless path of existence. Nevertheless, little Jock had done so in a dogged sort of way. He had been delicate, but he had always gone on all the same. Lately he had found the best of all allies and defenders in his sister, but no one else took much

notice of him, nor he of them ; and his father and he paid no attention to each other. Mr. Trevor took care not to stumble over him, being thoroughly accustomed to his presence ; and as for little Jock, he never stirred. He was on the rug in the body, but in soul he was in the forest of Ardennes, or tilting on the Spanish roads with Don Quixote. It was wonderful, some people thought, that such a baby should read at all, or reading that he should have any books above the level of those that are written in three syllables. But the child had no baby books, and therefore he took what he could get. Are not the baby books a snare and delusion, keeping children out of their inheritance ? How can they understand Shakespeare you will say ? and I suppose Jock did not understand ; yet that great person pervaded the very air about this little person, so that it glowed and shone. Only his shoulders raised a little way out of the white silky fluff of the rug, betrayed the immovable creature, and his book was almost lost altogether in it. There he lay, thinking nothing

of how his life was to run, or of the influences which might be developing round him. There was not a piece of furniture in the room which counted for less with Mr. Trevor than little Jock.

Ford was a long time coming ; he had some business of his own in hand, which, though not half so important, was on the whole more interesting to him than Mr. Trevor's business ; and then he had a little argumentation with Mrs. Ford before he could get away.

“What is it now?” Mrs. Ford said fretfully, “what does he make such a fuss about? Sure there's nothing so very wonderful in making a will. I'd say, ‘I leave all I have to my two children,’ and there would be an end of it. He makes as much of it as if it was a book he was writing. Many a book has been written with less fuss.”

“My dear,” said Ford, “there are many people who can write books and cannot make a will ; indeed the most of them have no need to, if all we hear is true. And you don't give a

a thought to the interests—I may say the colossal interests—that are involved."

"Pooh!" said Mrs. Ford, "I think of our own interests if you please, which are all I care for. Is he going to leave us anything? that is what I want to know."

"I am sorry you are so mercenary, my dear."

"I am not mercenary, Mr. Ford; but I like to see an inch before me, and know what is to become of me. He's failing fast, anyone can see that; and if we're left with the lease of a big house on our hands—" This was the danger that afflicted Mrs. Ford at all moments, and robbed her of her peace.

"Stuff!" Ford said. He knew a great deal about the important literary composition which the old gentleman was concocting; but "he was not at liberty" to mention what he knew. Sometimes it made him laugh secretly within himself, to think how differently she would talk if she too knew. But then that is the case in most matters. He went upstairs at last

deliberately, counting (as it seemed) every step, while Mr. Trevor sat impatient in his great chair, full of the enthusiasm of his own work, and thinking every minute an hour till he could show his friend, who was entirely in his confidence, who almost seemed like his *collaborateur*, the last stroke he had made. It was the *magnum opus* of Mr. Trevor's life, the work by which he hoped to be remembered, to attain that immortality in the recollection of other men which all men desire. For a long time he had been working at it, a little bit at a time as it occurred to him. He was not like the thriftless literary persons to whom Ford compared him, who write whether they have anything to say or not, whether the fountain is welling forth freely or has to be pumped up drop by drop. Mr. Trevor composed his great work under the most favourable conditions. He had it by him constantly, night and day, and when something occurred to him, if it were in the middle of the night, he would get up and wrap his dressing-gown round his shrunken person and put it down. He did

not forget it either sleeping or waking. It was a resource for his imagination, an occupation for his life. Also it was likely to prove a considerable source of occupation to others after his death, if nobody stepped in to lick it into shape.

When he heard Ford's step on the stairs he began to chuckle again, already enjoying the surprise and admiration which he felt his last new idea must call forth. Ford was a very good literary confidant. He would find fault with a trifle now and then, which made his general approbation all the more valuable, as showing that there was discrimination in it. Mr. Trevor put away the "Times" from his knees, and drew the blotting-book with its precious contents a little nearer. He waited with as much impatience as a lover would show for the appearance of his love. And he had time to take off his spectacles, clean them carefully, rubbing them with his handkerchief, and put them on again with great deliberation before Ford, after very carefully and audibly closing the door behind him, ap-

peared at last on the inner side of the screen which kept out the draught, that draught which rushed up the narrow ravine of the staircase as up an Alpine *coulloir* white with snow.

CHAPTER II.

OLD JOHN TREVOR.

JOHN TREVOR had been a schoolmaster for the greater part of his life. How he acquired so well sounding a name nobody knew. He had no relations, he always said, in the male line, and his friends on the mother's side were people of undistinguished surnames. And for the first fifty years of his life he had maintained a very even tenor of existence, always respectable, always a man who kept his engagements, paid his way, gave his entire attention, as his circulars said, to the pupils confided to his care; but even in his schoolmastership there was nothing of a remarkable character. After passing many obscure years as an usher he attained

to an academy of his own, in which a sound religious and commercial education was ensured, as the same circular informed the parents and guardians of Farafield, by the employment of most competent masters for all the branches included in the course, and by his own unremitting care. But often the masters at Mr. Trevor's academy were represented solely by himself, and the number of his pupils never embarrassed or overweighted him. The good man, however, worked his way all the same; he kept afloat, which so many find it impossible to do. If the number of scholars diminished he lived harder, when it increased he laid by a little. He was never extravagant, never forgot that his occupation was a precarious one, and thus—turning out a few creditable arithmeticians to fill up the places in the little “offices” of Farafield, the solicitor's, the auctioneer's, the big builder's, and even in the better shops, where they were the best of cashiers, never wrong in a total—he lived on from year to year. His house was but a dingy one, with a large room for his pupils, and two

upstairs, shabby enough, in which he lived ; but, by dint of sheer continuance and respectability, John Trevor, by the time he was fifty, was as much respected in Farafield as a man leading such a virtuous, colourless, joyless, unblamable existence has a right to be.

But at fifty a curious circumstance happened. John Trevor married. To say that he fell in love would perhaps scarcely represent the case. He had a friend who had been in India and all over the world, and who came home to Farafield with a liver-complaint, and a great deal of money, some people said. Trevor at first did not believe very much in the money. "I have enough to live upon," his friend said ; and what more was necessary ? No one knew very well how the money had been made—though that it was honestly acquired there was no doubt. He had been a clerk in an office in Farafield first, then because of his good conduct, which everybody had full faith in, and his business qualities (at which everybody laughed), he was sent to London by his employer, and received into an office there, from which he was

sent to India, coming home with this fortune, but with worn-out health, to his native place. "Fortune? you can call it a fortune if you like. It is enough to live on," John Trevor repeated, "that is all I know about it. To be sure that *is* a fortune, for to have enough for your old days, and not to be compelled to work, what could a man desire more? But poor Rainy will not enjoy it long," his old schoolfellow added regretfully. Rainy was older by five or six years than John Trevor; but fifty-six does not seem old when one is drawing near that age, though it is a respectable antiquity to youth. Rainy's sister had been a hard-working woman too; she had been a governess, and then had kept a school; then looked after the children of a widowed brother; and during her whole life had discharged the duties of the supernumerary woman in a large family, taking care of everybody who wanted taking care of. When her brother returned to Farafield she had come to him to be his companion and nurse. He gave her a very nice home, everybody said, with much

admiration of the brother's kindness and the sister's good luck. They lived in Swallow Street, in one of the old houses, which were warmer and better built than the new ones, and kept two maids, and had everything comfortable, if not handsome, about them. When poor Rainy died, Miss Rainy had a great deal of business to do which she did not at all understand. She had to refer to John Trevor perpetually in the first week or two, and she was not young any longer, nor ambitious, the good soul, and nobody had been so kind to her brother as John, and they had known each other all their lives. It came about thus quite naturally that they married. To be sure there were a great many people who said that Trevor married Miss Rainy for her money, as if poor old John at fifty had been able to have his choice of all the lovely young maidens of the district. But this was not the case; neither was it for love they married. They married for mutual support and company, not a bad motive after all. If there had been no money in the case, they would have

contented themselves in their loneliness ; but as she had a house and an independence, and he an occupation, they "felt justified," he said to all inquirers, in taking a step which otherwise they might not have contemplated. The consequences however were not at all such as they contemplated. Mrs. Trevor began, too late, with the energy of a workman who has no time to lose, the hard trade of a mother. She had one baby after another at headlong speed, losing them almost as soon as they were born, and losing her own health and tranquillity in the process. For some half dozen years the poor soul was either ill or in mourning. And at the end of that period she died. Poor Trevor saved his little Lucy out of the wreck, that was all ; there were five or six little mounds in the churchyard beside Mrs. Trevor's longer one, and so her kind old-maidenly existence was over ; for before she married she had been universally acknowledged, even by her closest friends, to be an old maid.

It was not till Mrs. Trevor was dead that it became fully known in Farafield that it was no

humble competency that had been left to her by her brother, but “an immense fortune.” Neither she nor her husband had known it till long after their marriage. Rainy had been a very clever business-man, though his townsfolk all laughed at the idea, and some of his speculations which had been all but forgotten, turned out at last to be real mines of gold. When it was known what a large, what a fabulous fortune it was, all Rainy’s kindred and connections were roused as one man. They crowded round Trevor, most of them demanding their share, almost all of them fully believing that he had known from the beginning how matters stood, and had married (being so much in request, poor old John !) solely on this inducement; but some of them on the other hand, showed their admiration by leaving their own little bits of fortune to Lucy, already so liberally endowed. Both of these effects were natural enough. Trevor held his own bravely against them all. Rainy had left his money to his sister; he knew best who deserved it; and it was not for him (Trevor) to an-

nul or allow to be annulled his brother-in-law's wishes, especially now that Lucilla Rainy (poor thing!) had a child to inherit all that belonged to her. He was not illiberal, however, though he was unyielding on the point of law and his child's rights, and between him and the town-clerk, who was a person of great influence and much trusted in by the surrounding population, the crowd of discontented relations were silenced. As for the others, those who insisted upon leaving their money to Lucy on the old and always popular principle, that to those that have shall be given, Trevor allowed them to do what seemed to them good; and by this treatment it came to pass that the fortune of Lucy acquired several additions. "Money draws money," the proverb says. Thus this man of fifty-six, with all the restrained and economical habits of a life-time passed in laborious endeavours to make the two ends meet, found himself at the latter end of his life with a great fortune and a motherless baby on his hands. The position in both ways was very strange to him. He gave up the

school, generously bestowing the goodwill, the furniture, and the remaining pupils on young Philip Rainy, the son of a cousin of his wife. He would not give away his child's money ; but he hoped, he said, that he would always be ready to serve an old friend with that which was his own. And then he gave himself up to the charge of Lucy's fortune. One thing that was to the credit of John Trevor, all Farafield said, was that he never gave himself any airs or committed any extravagances. He lived on the same income with which his wife and he had begun life, before the great windfalls came which made their little daughter one of the richest heiresses in England. He might have bought himself a great house, set up a carriage, tried to make his way into society. But he did none of these things. He lived on in the old way, without fuss or show, nursed Lucy's fortune and rolled it into ever-increasing bulk like a snowball, and had Lucy nursed as best he might with no woman to help him. How it was that in this respectable and right-minded career there

should have occurred the interval of folly in which little Jock came into the world, who can tell? The second Mrs. Trevor was a good woman enough, and had acted for some years as his housekeeper and the superintendant of Lucy's health and comfort—a comely person too, which perhaps had something to do with it. But nobody ever dwelt upon this moment of aberration in old Trevor's life, for his second wife died as his first wife had done, and there would have been an end of the incident but for little Jock. And nobody made much account of him.

When the second Mrs. Trevor died, he gave up housekeeping. Perhaps he was afraid of other risks that might attend him in the same way. When a man is a widower for the second time it is impossible to say what Bluebeard career he may not rush into. In this as in so many other things, *il n'y a que le premier pas qui coûte*. After that there is no telling to what lengths you may go. So Trevor wisely withdrew from all hazards. He looked about him carefully, and fixed upon Mrs. Ford, who

was a cousin of his first wife. Ford was just then beginning to sigh and make comparisons between his own lot and that of his employer, who was his contemporary, and had just retired with, if not a fortune, at least a competency. "Whereas I shall have to slave on to the end," Ford said. One evening, however, his wife came out to meet him in high excitement to tell him what had happened.

"He will buy the lease for us," she said, "and set us up, and then he will take our lodgings. I never should have thought old Trevor would be so liberal; but I suppose it is for poor Lucilla's sake."

And next day they went and inspected No. 6 in the Terrace. Mr. and Mrs. Ford felt that it was a solemn moment in their career; they had no children, and they liked to be comfortable, but such a piece of grandeur as a house in the Terrace had never come within the range of their hopes; and Mrs. Ford liked the idea of the cook, and the housemaid, and the parlourmaid. Thus the bargain was made; and though the

Fords had not found it quite so delightful as it appeared at first, yet the experiment was on the whole a successful one. The household got on as well as it was possible for such a composite household to do. Sometimes a maid would be saucy, and give Mrs. Ford to understand as she knew very well who was the real master; and sometimes Mr. Trevor would make himself disagreeable and find fault with the eggs, or complain of the tea. But barring these rufflings of the rose leaves, all went very well with the house. When she was not thinking of her housekeeping, Mrs. Ford kept a convenient little fund of misery on hand, which she could draw upon at the shortest notice, as to the position in which she and her husband would be left when Mr. Trevor died. Mr. Trevor was now seventy, so that the fear was not unnatural, and she was a woman full of anxieties who liked to have one within reach. Ford was above all this; he knew that they were not to be left with the lease of the house in the Terrace and nothing more to trust to. For he had become Mr. Tre-

vor's confidant. It is not so touching a relationship as that which exists at the theatre between the first and second ladies, the heroine in white satin and the confidant in muslin; but it is doubtful whether Tilburina ever made revelations more exciting than those over which these two old men wagged their beards—or rather their smooth old chins, well shaven every morning; for at their age and in their condition of life beards were still unknown.

Mr. Trevor was sixty-five when the idea of making his will occurred to him first. Not that he had left Lucy's fortune in any doubt up to that moment. A brief and concise little document existed in his lawyer's hands, putting her rights entirely beyond question; but it was years after the making of this first will that the idea occurred to him of shaping out Lucy's life for her, and settling the course of years after he should have himself passed from the conduct of affairs. He was a man who had lived a very matter-of-fact life; but John Trevor was not a man without imagination. Even in

the days when he had least time for such vanities, there had been gleams of fancy about him, and he had always been fond of entering into the circumstances of his pupils, and giving them his advice. They all knew that to have his advice asked was a thing that pleased him. And the management of a great fortune excites the mind and draws forth the imagination. He had to throw himself into all the combinations of speculative money-making, the romance of shares and coupons, and had acquired a sort of divination, a spirit of prophecy, a power of seeing what was about to pay or not to pay. Some men have this power by nature, but few acquire it; and no doubt it had lain dormant in John Trevor all the years during which, having no money to invest, he had not cared to exercise his faculties as to the best investment. When, however, he had made many very successful *coups*, and eluded many stumbles, and steered triumphantly through some dangers, a sense of his own cleverness and power stole into his heart. He felt that he was a man

with great powers of administration, and instincts which it was a thousand pities not to make use of; and it suddenly came into his mind one evening, when he had just added several thousand pounds to Lucy's fortune by a very successful and clever operation, that he might exercise these powers in a still more effectual way. Ah! if Lucy's fortune had been a poor little trumpery bit of a fortune, not enough for the girl to live on, it would not have increased like this, it would never have doubled itself, as old Trevor's money did! Even Providence seemed in the compact, and gave the advantage to the heiress, just as the richer people of the Rainy kindred did, who gave her their money because she had so much already. But this is a digression. As Mr. Trevor thought over the whole question—and naturally Lucy's fortune, which was his chief occupation, was also the thing that took up most of his thoughts—he could not but feel a vivid regret that it would be impossible to outlive his own ending, and see how the money throve in Lucy's hands. This seems a whimsical regret, but it is not an unnatural one. Could we only

keep a share of what is going on, could we but be sure of seeing our ideas carried out, and assisting at our own dying and burying, and all that would follow after, death would be a much less dismal matter. To be sure, in most cases the penalty of this post-mortem spectatorship would be that we should not see our ideas carried out at all. But this was not what Mr. Trevor looked forward to. He would have been quite content to give up his share in the world, if he could only have kept an eye on the course of events afterwards, and retained some power of suggesting, at least, what ought to be done. But even under the most favourable view, the hereafter for which we hope, was not likely, Mr. Trevor felt, to permit any active intervention of the disembodied spirit in the matter of stock or shares. And it was a painful check to him to feel that in a few years, at the most, Lucy's property and herself would be deprived of the invaluable guidance which his own experience and intelligence could give. It was while this regret was heavy upon him that the idea of making a will suddenly occurred to

him—not the ordinary sort of will, a thing which, as already indicated, was made long ago, but a potential and living instrument, by which out of his grave he would still be able to look after the affairs which had cost him so much trouble, and which had so prospered in his hands. The idea stirred him with the liveliest thrill of pleasure. He began the document the very next day, after laying in a stock of paper, large blue folio, lined and crackling, that the very outward form might be absolutely correct. And it was a very remarkable document; it was the romance, the poem of John Trevor's life. Sitting by himself among his coupons and account-books, he had evolved out of his own consciousness, bit by bit, the ideal of a millionaire—nay of a female millionaire—of an heiress, not in her usual aspect as the prey of fortune-hunters, pursued for love, not of herself, but of her money. The sentimental side of the question did not touch old Trevor at all. He thought of his daughter from a very different point of view. If he ever reflected upon a possible husband for her, it was with great

impatience and distaste of the idea. He would rather, if he could, have settled for her that she should never marry. He wanted her to be herself, not anybody's wife. All his calculations were for her as she was, Lucy Trevor, not for Mrs. So-and-so. It seemed to him that the woman who would take up his sketch of existence, and carry it out, would be something much more worth thinking of than a married lady of the ordinary level. She would be a very important person indeed, in her father's sketch of her, making what he intended to be a very fine use of her money, and living for that end like a princess. He did not cut off any portion of her duties, because she was a woman; indeed he thought no more of that fact than in so far as it was this which gave him his chief certainty of being able to mould her, and make her life what he wished. He would not, probably, have thought it worth his while to take so much trouble had she been a boy; he would not have had the same faith in her, nor the same feeling about her position. It would have been more a matter of course, not so

interesting to the fancy. Perhaps a girl, in all cases, answers the purpose of an ideal better than a boy does. Old Trevor did not think much about the question of sex, but instinctively felt that the girl was what he wanted, and it would be impossible to conceive an exercise of the imagination more exciting, more interesting. It was as near like creating a human being as anything could be. Of the character of Lucy—in the flesh, a slim and quiet girl of sixteen—her father knew not very much ; but the Lucy who, day by day, developed more and more in the will became a personage very distinct to him. The manner in which she was to conduct herself in all the difficulties she might meet, was the subject of his continual thoughts : until at last it seemed to the old man that he saw her as in a mirror moving along through the difficulties and perplexities of her life in which his own position would enable him to accompany her and help her with his advice—rather than that he was actually inventing the entire course of her experience for her.

This was the subject upon which Ford was Mr. Trevor's confidant. He could not have lived all alone in this imaginary world; he had to consult some one, to tell some one of all the developments of his imagination as he traced his heiress through her life. And Ford, you may be sure, liked to know every particular, and was pleased to have a hand in the guidance of so rich a person, and to help to decide how so much money was to be spent. It made him feel as if he were rich himself. He made a very judicious confidant. He agreed in all Mr. Trevor's ideas in the greater matters, and differed in trifles, just enough to show the independence of his judgment; and as it happened, there was something particularly interesting to Ford in the chapter of Lucy's future life at which they had now arrived.

CHAPTER III.

THE WILL.

“I THINK I have got it now, Ford, I think I have got it now,” the old man said, rubbing his hands. “But it has given me a great deal of trouble. Get yourself a chair, and sit down. I want you to hear how I’ve put it. I think, though I don’t want to be conceited, that this time I have hit upon the very thing. Sit down, Ford, and give me your advice.”

Ford found himself a chair, and put it in front of the fire. His feet were close to little Jock on the hearth-rug, but neither did he pay the least attention to little Jock, any more than if he had been a little dog half buried in the fur. The

child moved now and then, as his position became fatiguing. He changed now an elbow, now the hand with which he held his book, and sometimes fluttered the pages as he turned them ; but these little movements were like the falling of the ashes from the grate, or the little flickers of the flames, and no one took any notice. Jock kept on reading his Shakespeare, wholly absorbed in it ; yet as in a dream heard them talking, and remembered afterwards, as children do, what they had said.

“Listen !” said Mr. Trevor. He was so eager to read that he had taken his MS. into his hands before his confidant was ready to hear, and waited, clearing his throat while Ford took his seat. Then without a pause, raising his hand to command attention, he began :

“In respect to the future residence of my daughter Lucy, up to the moment of her coming of age, I desire that her time should be divided between two homes which I have selected for her. It is my wish that she should pass the first six months of every year in the house and under

the care of Lady Randolph, Park Street, London——.”

Here Ford interrupted with an exclamation of astonishment. “Lady Randolph!” he said.

Trevor paused, and uttered his usual chuckle, but with a still livelier note of pleasure in it. “Ah!” he said. “Lady Randolph, that surprises you, Ford. We haven’t many titles among us, have we? but she’s a relation of poor Lucilla’s all the same; or at least she says so,” he added with another chuckle. “There is nothing like money for opening people’s eyes.”

“A relation of Lucilla’s!” Ford’s amazement was not more genuine than the impression of awe made upon him by the name. “I never knew the Rainys had any rich relations. I suppose you mean Sir Thomas Randolph at the Hall, the lord of the manor, he that was Member for the county when I first came here—the present Sir Thomas’s uncle—the——”

“That will do,” said the old man. “It’s not Sir Thomas, but it’s his wife, or his widow, to

be exact. She says she is a relation—no, a connection of Lucilla's—and she ought to know best. She has made me an offer to take charge of Lucy, and introduce her, as she calls it. I've been of use to my Lady Randolph in the way of business, and she wants to be of use to me. I don't ask, for my part, if it's altogether disinterested. It appears there was a Randolph that married beneath him ; I can't tell you how long ago. My Lady," said old Trevor dryly, " would not break her heart, perhaps, if another Randolph married beneath him, and into the same family too."

"But," said Ford, "that would be no reason for putting Lucy in her hands—a poor lamb in the way of the wolf."

"One wolf is not a bad thing to keep off others ; besides, my good fellow, I've taken every precaution. Wait till you see," and he resumed his manuscript, with again a little preparatory clearing of his throat.

"The latter part of the year it is my wish that Lucy should spend in the house which has

already been her home for some years, under the charge of her other relations, Richard Ford and Susan, his wife, who have been her fast friends since ever she can recollect, and to whom for this purpose I hereby give and bequeath the said house, No. 6 in the Terrace, in the parish of Farafield, in the hundred of—”

“Stop a bit!” said Ford feebly; he was overcome by his feelings. “‘Her fast friends,’ ” he repeated. “that’s just what we are. We’ve loved her like our own, that’s what we’ve always done, Susan and me. And as for Susan, many’s the time she has said, ‘Supposing anything was to happen, or any change to occur, what should we do without Lucy? It would be like losing a child of our own.’ ”

“Then you approve?” Trevor said. He liked to receive the full expression of the gratitude which was his due.

“Approve!” said Ford. When a man without any natural dignity to speak of, is moved tearfully, the effect is sometimes less pathetic than ludicrous; the good man did all but cry.

“It isn’t the property, Mr. Trevor, it’s the trust,” he said, with a restrained sob. “But one thing I’ll promise, it shan’t be a trust betrayed. We’ll watch over her night and day. There shall be no wolf come near her while she’s with Susan and me.”

“In moderation! in moderation!” said the old man, waving his hand. “I don’t want her to be watched night and day; something must be left to Lucy herself.”

“Ah!” said Ford, drawing a long breath. He had the air of a man who was ready to patrol under his ward’s window with a pair of pistols. “Lucy has a great deal of sense, but to expose a girl to the wiles of a set of fortune-hunters is what I would never do—and with that worldly-minded old woman. Ah! Mr. Trevor, you’re too kind, you’re too kind. Lady Randolph is not one that would step out of her own sphere for nothing. It isn’t any desire she has to be kind to you.”

“Her own sphere,” said Mr. Trevor. “Money levels all spheres. And Lucy is an

heiress, which makes her equal to a prince of the blood. But," he added with a chuckle, snapping his fingers, "*that* for the fortune-hunters! I've put bolt and bar between them and their prey. It's all done in black and white, and I don't know who can go against it. Listen, Ford.

"It is further my wish, and I hereby stipulate that my said daughter, Lucy, shall contract no marriage up to the age hereinafter mentioned without the consent of the following parties, who will consider themselves as a sort of committee for the disposal of her hand, and whom I hereby appoint and constitute her guardians, so far as this subject is concerned; it being fully understood that this appointment does not confer any power or authority over her pecuniary concerns. The committee which I thus charge with the arrangement of her marriage is to consist of the three persons above mentioned, to wit, Dame Elena Randolph, Richard Ford, and Susan Ford, his wife, with the following assessors added:—Robert Rushton, Esq., town-

clerk of Farafield, my old friend ; the Rev. William Williamson, of the Congregational Chapel, my pastor ; and Mrs. Maria Stone, schoolmistress, of the same place——”

“But, Mr. Trevor!” Ford ejaculated with a gasp. The paragraph he had just listened to took away his breath.

“Well? Out with your objections ; let us hear them,” said old Trevor, turning upon him, brisk, and lively, and ready for war.

“Objections! yes, I cannot deny it, I have objections,” said Ford hesitating. “Mr. Trevor, you know better than I do, you that have had such quantities of money passing through your hands ; but——”

“Out with it,” said Trevor ; he rubbed his hands. It was an amusement the more to him to have his arrangements questioned.

“You can’t have taken everything into consideration. Six people—*six*, all so different. If she has to get all their consents, she will never marry at all.”

“And no great harm done either,” said old

Trevor briefly, “if that is all. Why should she marry? A woman who is poor, who wants somebody to work for her, that is comprehensible; but a woman with a lot of money, there is no reason why she shouldn’t stay as she is. What should she get married for?”

Ford scratched his head; he did not quite make it out. This was a challenge to all his convictions. It touched, he felt, the very first prerogative of man. Where were all true foundations of primal supremacy and authority to go to, if it were once set up as a rule that marriage was no longer necessary to woman-kind?

“It’s always a good thing for a woman to marry,” he said hoarsely. Many a radical opinion he had heard from his lodger, but never anything so sweeping as this.

“Ah! you think so,” said old Trevor. “There was poor Lucilla, to go no further. She might have been alive yet, and enjoying her good fortune, if she had not married me.”

This disturbed still more the man of orthodox ideas; he could do nothing but stare at the old revolutionary. What might he not say next?

“I suppose,” he said, after a while, “poor Lucilla would never have hesitated; she was a woman who never considered her own comfort, in comparison with doing her duty.”

“Her duty, poor soul! how was it her duty to marry me? Poor thing, I’ve always been very sorry for her,” said Trevor, “Women have hard times in this world. But a girl with a great fortune, she may be kept out of it.” Here he paused, while his companion sat opposite to him, his very mouth open with amazement. It was indeed more than amazement, it was consternation which filled the honest mind of Richard Ford. He did not know what to think of this; was it a new phase of Radicalism worse than any that had gone before? He would have said it was Popery if he had not known how far from any ideas of that description his old friend was. While he sat thus half stupefied with astonish-

ment, old Trevor took up his pen again hastily. “Now I think of it,” he said, “Lucy belongs to the country, I don’t hold much with the Church, but the Church should have a hand in it. I’ll add the Rector to the committee. That will be only a proper respect.

“The Rector!” said Ford, pale with wonder, “and Mr. Williamson at the chapel, and Mr. Rushton, and Mrs. Stone, and me!——”

“You forget Lady Randolph,” said old Trevor with a chuckle, “that’s exactly as it ought to be, all classes represented, the right thing for a girl in Lucy’s position. To tell the truth,” he added, laying down his pen, “I don’t know that there ever was a girl in Lucy’s position before. It’s a very fine position, and I hope she’s been brought up to feel all the responsibilities. I don’t want to brag of myself; but given an unusual situation like hers, and I think I’ve hit the right thing for it. When you are born a great lady that’s different; but a girl with the greatest fortune in England, proceeding out of the lower classes—”

“I don’t see,” said Ford, aggrieved, “that we need call ourselves the lower classes ; the middle—that is about what it is—the middle class—the strength of the country.”

“Bosh!” said Trevor; “she will go to Lady Randolph’s, and there she will see fine people, and no doubt she’ll be courted. There is nobody like them for knowing the value of money ; and then she will come to you, Dick Ford, where she will see nobody, or else a few young clerks and that sort.”

“I assure you,” said Ford solemnly, “I will take care that she shall see no one here ; not a man shall enter the house, not a creature come near her, while she is under my care.”

“That will be lively for Lucy,” said the old man, “you numscull ! if she never sees anyone how is she to make a choice.”

“Mr. Trevor,” said Ford with a voice so solemn and serious that it trembled, “you would not wish your heiress to make a choice among the young clerks ? Whom you say,” he added

after a moment in a tone of offence, “she will meet here.”

“She is not *my* heiress, you stupid fellow. She is Lucilla’s heiress, poor Rainy’s heiress; what was he but a young clerk? Why shouldn’t she if she likes marry into her own class? That’s your snobbishness, Ford. You will find nothing of that in me. If she likes a man who is in the same rank of life as Rainy was when he began to make his fortune, or as I was (when I was that age) why let her marry him in heaven’s name and be happy—that is,” said old Trevor chuckling, “if she can get her guardians to consent.”

“Mr. Trevor,” said Ford hurriedly, with the tremulousness of real feeling, “I must protest, I must really protest. I ~~am~~ very conscious of the great kindness you are showing to us; but I cannot sit quiet and see poor Lucy doomed to such a fate. She will never get all her guardians to consent. Put it into one person’s hands, whom you please, but for goodness’ sake don’t leave the poor thing to fight with half-a-dozen;

the end will be that she will never be married at all."

"And that won't kill her," said Trevor, "do you think I want her to marry? Not a bit, not a bit. 'She is better if she so abide.' Don't you know who said that? And I agree with St. Paul, whatever you may do."

Now the idea of not agreeing with St. Paul was terrible to Ford; it scandalised him utterly: for he was a Low Churchman, and much devoted to the writer of the Epistles.

"There never could be any question on that point," he said, "if you ask me whether I believe in my Bible, Mr. Trevor! but I cannot pretend that I understand that passage. There is more in it, I make bold to say, than meets the eye. There's a type in it, or a similitude. I am not a learned man, I can't tell you what it is in the original, but there's more in it than we think."

Old Trevor laughed—he was quite as staunch a believer as his friend: but being a Congrega-

tionalist, he was naturally a little more at his ease on such subjects than even the lowest of Churchmen. He was not shocked by the idea that it might be possible not to agree with St. Paul, and he was not so sure of the hidden meaning.

“It is quite enough for me as it stands,” he said, “and as for Lucy’s marriage—”

Here there was an interruption that startled these old conspirators. Little Jocky, who had been lying as still as a mouse at their feet, with no movement except that of turning a leaf of his book, now began to stir. They had forgotten his very existence, as they often did. He had not been paying much attention to them, but probably he had heard other sounds more interesting to him, which they on the other hand had taken no notice of. At this stage he suddenly jumped up on his feet like a little acrobat, startling them greatly. He was not at all unlike an acrobat with his long slim pliable limbs, and his faded suit of blue velvet-teen, a little short in the arms, and white in

the seams. He got up with a bound, like a thing on springs, immediately under Mr. Ford's nose, who was much discomfited by the sudden movement. It was a thing that had happened before, but Mr. Ford had confessed that it was not a thing to which he could accustom himself. He was not used to children, and he was nervous; little Jock's jump made him jump too.

“What is it? What is the matter?” he cried.

But just then the door opened softly behind the screen, and a soft voice said, “I have come home, papa, I have come to take Jock for his walk. Do you want anything?”

“Not that I know of, my dear, not that I know of; except yourself, and I shall have you by and bye,” said the old man, his countenance expanding. She was not visible behind the high screen, but her voice seemed to throw a new element, something of softness and comfort into the air.

“At tea, papa. Come, Jock,” said the voice,

and the little fellow was gone almost before the words were said. The two old men sat quite silent, and listened to the steps going down the stairs. It was not an unusual incident, but it is scarcely possible not to feel an uneasy sensation when you have been discussing, much more deciding, the fate of another, and suddenly that other looks in and interrupts your secret combinations by the sound of an innocent and affectionate voice. Such unconsciousness is more trying to a conspirator than any suspicion of his motives. Even when it is a private consultation between a father and mother on the expediency of sending a child to school, with what compunctions the sudden appearance of the unconscious victim overwhelms them! Old Trevor himself was moved by it, though he was not a likely subject for penitence.

“She hasn’t much notion what we’re settling,” he said. “Poor little Lucy, I wonder if it’s a good thing for a bit of a girl to have such a fate before her. But it is a fine position—a fine position; not many have such a chance, and I

hope I've bred her up to understand what it is."

"Poor child," Ford breathed, in a sigh which was not unmixed with personal feeling, for notwithstanding the substantial advantages promised to him, and the gratifying character of the trust conferred, there already began to appear before the good man, not too confident in his own firmness or force of character, a crowd of difficulties to come. How would he be able to resist if a fine lady like Lady Randolph took him in hand? And how would Susan stand out against cajoling. He sighed, beginning to foresee that it would not be unmixed happiness to be Lucy's guardian even for six months in the year. But Lucy's appearance, or rather Lucy's voice, had disturbed the sitting effectually. Mr. Trevor folded up his blue manuscript, and put it back into the blotting-book, and he lifted the "Times" from the little table on which it had been spread out, and once more arranged it on his knees.

"We'll go into further detail," he said, "another time. I'll give you the help of all my

lights, Dick Ford. You'll want them to steer your way clear, and you can tell Susan there shan't be any want of money. That is what she'll think of first."

"I hope, Mr. Trevor, that you don't think money is the only thing we think of, either Susan or me."

"It is a very important thing," said the old man. "I have been poor, and now I am rich, and it isn't a matter that will let itself be kept in the background. But you shall have plenty of money, tell Susan so, and for other things you must do your best."

"I hope we'll do that in any case," Ford said devoutly, and he went downstairs with nervous solemnity, holding his head very high. He was very conscientious even in the smallest matters, and it may be supposed that this tremendous call upon him, as soon as he began to realise it, went to the very depths of that conscience which was alert and anxious in the minutest affairs. Old Trevor watched him disappear behind the screen, waited till the door had audibly

closed behind him, then with a chuckling laugh resumed his newspaper.

“I’ve given *him* something to think about,” he said, with a grin of mischievous satisfaction to himself.

CHAPTER IV.

SISTER AND BROTHER.

FROM the two old men and their consultations it was a relief, even in that chilly and dismal day, to get outside into the free air, though it was heavy with the chill of moisture turning into frost. It was not a cheerful world outside. The sky was the colour of lead, and hung low in one uniform tint of dulness over the wet world, with all its wetness just on the point of congealing. The common stretched out its low green broken lines and brown divisions of path to touch the limited horizon. Mrs. Stone's school, the big white house which stood on the north side, had a sort of halo of mist hang-

ing round it, and everything that moved moved drearily, as unable to contend against the depression in the air. But little Jock Trevor was impervious to that depression ; it was the moment of all the twenty-four hours in which he was happy. Though he had lain as still on the rug as if there was no quicksilver at all in his little veins, he could scarcely stand quietly now to have his little greatcoat put on, which his sister did with great care. She was seventeen, a staid little person, with much composure of manners, dressed in a grey walking-dress, trimmed with grey fur, very neat, comfortable, and sensible, but not quite becoming to Lucy, who was of that kind of fair complexion which tends towards greyness ; fair hair, with no colour in it, and a face more pale than rosy. Ill-natured people said of her that she was all the same colour, hair, cheeks, and eyes—which was not true, and yet so far true as to make the grey dress the least favourable envelope that could have been chosen. There was no irregularity of any kind about her appearance ; all

was exact, the very impersonation of neatness ; a ribbon awry, an irregularity of line anywhere, would have been a relief, but no such relief was afforded to the spectator. Whoever might be found fault with for untidiness in Mrs. Stone's establishment, it never was Lucy ; her collars were always spotless ; her ribbons always neatly tied ; her dress, the very perfection of good order and completeness. She put on her brother's little coat, and buttoned it to the last button, though he was dancing all the time with impatience ; then enveloped his throat with a warm woollen scarf, and tucked in the ends. "Now your gloves, Jocky," she said, and she would not move till he had dragged these articles on, and had them buttoned in their turn. "What does it matter if you are two minutes earlier or later," she said, "you silly little Jock ; far better to have them buttoned before you go out than to struggle with them all the way. Now have you got your handkerchief, and has your hat been brushed properly ? Well," Lucy added, surveying him with mingled satisfaction

in the result and reluctance to allow it to be complete, "now we may go."

If she had not held him by the hand, there is no telling what caracoling Jock might have burst into by way of exhausting the first outburst of exhilaration. The contact with the fresh air, though it was not anything very lively in the way of air, moved all the childhood in his veins. He strained Lucy's arm, as a hound strains at a leash, jumping about her as they went on. Almost her staid steps were beguiled out of their usual soft maidenly measure by the gambols of the little fellow.

"Let's have a run to the gate," he said. "Oh, Lucy, come, run me to the gate," and he dragged at her hand to get loose from its hold. But, when he escaped, Jock did not care to run alone. He came back to her, out of breath.

"I wish I could have a real run—just once," he said with a sigh; then brightening up, "or a wrestling like Shakespeare—I'll tell you who I'd like to be, Lucy, I'd like to be Orlando

when he had just killed that big bully of a man——”

“Jock! you wouldn’t like to kill anyone, I hope.”

“Oh, shouldn’t I!” cried the boy; “just to see him go down, and turn over on his face, and clench his hands. Do they always do that, I wonder? You see them in the pictures all with their fists clenched, clawing at the ground. Well,” he added with magnanimity, “he needn’t quite die, you know; I’d like him only to be badly hurt, as bad as if he were killed, and then to get better. I daresay,” said the child, “Charles got better, you know, after Orlando threw him. It isn’t said that he was regularly killed.”

“Is it a pretty story you’ve been reading, dear?” said Lucy sweetly, altogether ignorant of Orlando. And she was not ashamed of her ignorance, nor did Jock know that she had any reason to be ashamed.

“That’s the best bit,” he said impartially. “The rest is mostly about girls. It was the

Duke's wrestler, you know, a big beast like—oh, I don't know anybody so big—a drayman," said Jock, as a big waggon lumbered by, laden with barrels, with one of those huge specimens of humanity (and beer) moving along like a clumsy tower by its side. "Like *him*; and Orlando was quite young, you know, not so very big—like me, when I am grown up."

"You don't know what you will be when you are grown up, you silly little boy. Perhaps you will never grow up at all," said Lucy, somewhat against her conscience improving the occasion.

Jock stood for a moment with wide open eyes. Then resumed.

"I shan't be big or fat, like that fellow. When I am about seventeen, or perhaps twenty-two, and never taught to box or anything. I would have gone in at him," cried Jack, throwing out his poor arm, with a very tightly-clenched woollen glove at the end of it, "just like Orlando, just like this; and down he'd go like, like—" But imagination did not serve

him in this particular. "Like Charles did," he concluded, with a dropping of his voice, which betrayed a consciousness of the failure, not in grammar, but in force of metaphor. Jock's experience did not furnish any parallel incident.

"You must never fight when you grow up," said Lucy. "Gentlemen never do; except when they are soldiers, and have to go and fight for the Queen."

"Does the Queen want to be fought for?" said Jock. "If any fellow was to bully her or hit her—"

"Oh!" cried Lucy horrified, "nobody would do that; but people sometimes go against the country, Jock, and then the people that are fighting for England are said to be fighting for the Queen."

Jock's mind, however, went astray in the midst of this discourse. There passed the pair in the road a very captivating little figure—a small boy, much smaller even than Jock, with long fair locks streaming down his shoulders, in the

most coquettish of dresses, mounted upon a beautiful cream-coloured pony, as tiny as its rider. What child could pass this little equestrian and not gaze after him? The children sighed out of admiration and envy when they saw him, for he was a very well-known figure about Farafield; but the elders shook their heads and said, "Poor child!" Why should the old people say, "Poor child!" and the young ones regard him with such admiring eyes? It was little Gerald Ridout, the son of the Circus proprietor. Nobody was better known. As he rode along, the most daring little rider, on his pretty little Arab, which was as pretty as himself, with his long flowing curls waving, there could have been no such attractive advertisement. The Circus travelled for a great part of the year, but its home was in Farafield, and everybody knew little Gerald. Jock fixed his glistening eyes upon him from the moment of his appearance—eyes that shone with pleasure and sympathy, and that wistful longing to be as beautiful and happy, which is not envy. There was nothing of

the more hateful sentiment in little Jock's heart, but because he admired he would have liked to resemble, had that been within his power. He followed the child with his eyes as long as he was visible. Then he asked: "Do people who are rich have ponies, Lucy?" with much gravity and earnestness.

"Very often, dear, and horses too; but that poor little fellow is not rich, you know."

"I should like to be him," said Jock.

"A little circus-boy? to ride upon the stage, and have all the most horrid people staring at you?"

"And jump through the hoop, and gallop, gallop, and have a pony like that all to myself. Ah—h!" Jock cried with a long-drawn breath.

"Would you like a pony so very much, Jocky? Then some day you shall have one," said his sister in her tranquil voice. "I will buy you one when I am rich."

"Are you *soon* going to be rich?" said the

little boy doubtfully. Like wiser people, he preferred the smallest bird in the hand to a whole aviary in the dim and doubtful distance. But Lucy had not a very lively sense of humour. She knew the circumstances better than he did, and said, "Hush! hush!" with a little awe.

"Not for a very long time, I hope," she said.

Her little brother looked at her with wondering eyes; but this mystery was too deep for him to solve. He had no insight into those deep matters which occupied his father's time, nor had he the least notion that Lucy's wealth depended upon that father's death, though it had all been discussed with so much detail day by day over his dreaming head.

"When you are rich, shall I be rich too, Lucy?" he said.

"I am afraid not, Jock; but if I am rich, it will not matter; you shall have whatever you please. Won't that do just as well?

Jock paused and thought.

"Why shouldn't I be rich too?" he remarked.

It was not said as a question ; it was an observation. The fact did not trouble him, but *en passant* he noticed it as a thing which might perhaps want explaining. It was not of half so much importance, however, as the next thing that came into his head.

“I say, Lucy, do you think that boy on the pony has to go to school ? What do you think he can be learning at school ? I should like to go there too.”

“When you go, it shall be to a much nicer place,” she said with energy, “There is one thing I should like to be rich for, and that is for you, little Jock. You don’t know anything at all yet. You ought to be learning Greek, and Latin, and mathematics, and a great many other things. It makes me quite unhappy when I think of it. I go to school, but it does not matter for me ; and you are living all your time, not learning anything, reading nonsense on the hearth-rug. I could cry when I think of it,” Lucy said. She said it very quietly, but this was vehemence in her.

Jock looked up at her with wondering eyes ; for his own part he had no enthusiasm for study, nor except for the pleasure of being with the Circus boy, whom he vaguely apprehended as caracoling about the very vague place which his imagination conceived of as “ school,” on his pretty pony, had he any desire to be sent there ; but it did not occur to him to enter into any controversy on the subject.

“ Are you going up-town, Lucy ?” he asked, “ have you got to go to shops *again* ? I wish you would buy all your ribbons at one time, and not be always, always buying more. Aunty Ford when she goes out goes to shops too, and you have to stand and stare about, and there’s nothing to look at, and nothing to do.”

“ What would you like to do, Jock ?”

“ Oh, I don’t know—nothing,” said the boy ; “ if I had a pony I’d get up on its back and ride off a hundred miles before I stopped.”

“ The horse couldn’t go a hundred miles, nor you either, dear.”

“ Oh yes, I could, or ten at least, and if I

met anyone on the road I'd run races with him ; and I'd call the horse Black Bess, or else Rosy-nant, or else Chiron ; but Chiron wasn't only a horse you know, he was a horse-man."

"Well, dear," said Lucy calmly, "I wish you were a horseman too, if you would like it so very much."

"You don't understand," cried the child, "you don't understand ! I couldn't be like Chiron ; he had four legs, he was a man-horse. He brought up a little boy once, lots of little boys, and taught them. I say, Lucy, if Chiron was living now I should like to go to school to him."

"You are a silly little boy," said Lucy, "who ever heard of a schoolmaster that had four legs ? I wonder papa lets you read so many silly books."

"They are not silly books at all, it is only because you don't know," said Jock, reddening. "Suppose we were cast on a desert island, what would *you* do ? You don't know any stories to tell round the fire ; but I know heaps of stories,

I know more stories than anyone. Aunty Ford is pretty good," the little fellow went on reflectively, "*she* knows some; and she likes me to tell her out of Shakespeare, and about the Three Calendars, and the Genii in the Bottle, and that improves her mind; but if you were in a desert island what *should* you do? You don't know one story to tell."

"I should cook your suppers, and mend your clothes, and make the fire."

"Ah!" said the boy with a little contempt: "bread and milk would do, you know, or when we shot a deer we'd just put him before the fire and roast him. We shouldn't want much cooking; and the skin would do for clothes."

"You would not be at all comfortable like that," said Lucy, gravely shocked by the savagery of the idea, "even Robinson Crusoe had to sew the skins together and make them into a coat; and how could you have milk," she added, "without some one to milk the cow?"

"I will tell you something that is very strange," said Jock, "Aunty Ford never read

Robinson Crusoe; but she knows Christian off by heart, and all about Mary and Christiana and the children. And she knows the history of Joseph, and David, and Goliath; so you cannot say she is quite ignorant; and she makes me tell her quantities of things."

"You should not mix up your stories," said Lucy, "the Bible is not like other books. About Joseph and David and those other—" (Lucy had almost said gentlemen, which seemed the most respectful expression; but she paused, reflecting with a little horror that this was too modern and common a title for Bible personages.) "They are for Sunday," she went on, more severely, to hide her own confusion, "they are not like Robinson Crusoe or the Genii in the Bottle; you ought not to mix them all up."

"It is Christian that is the *most* Sunday," said Jock, "she explains it to me, and all what it means, about the House Beautiful and the ladies that lived there. There is a Punch, Lucy! and there's Cousin Philip; never mind him, but

run, run, and let us have a good look at the Punch."

"I mustn't run," said Lucy holding him back, "and I cannot stand and look at Punch. If Mrs. Stone were to see me, she never would let me come out with you any more."

"Oh, run, run!" cried the little boy, straining at her hand like a hound in a leash. He had dragged her half across the street when Cousin Philip came up. This was the only other relative with whom Mr. Trevor had kept up any intercourse. He was the young man to whom the old schoolmaster had made over his school, and he too, like Lucy, was taking advantage of the half holiday. In Farafield, where young men were scarce, Philip Rainy had already made what his friends called a very good impression. He was not it was true (to his eternal confusion and regret) a University man; but neither was he a certificated schoolmaster. He had greatly raised the numbers of old John Trevor's school, and he occupied a kind of debateable position on the borders of gentility, partly because of his

connection with the enriched family perhaps, but partly because his appearance and manners were good, and his aspirations were lofty from a social point of view. He had begun with a determination to resist steadily all claims upon him from below, and to assert courageously a right to stand upon the dais of Farafeld society ; and though there may be many discouragements in the path of a young man thus situated, it is astonishing how soon a steady resolution of this kind begins to tell. He had been five years in old John Trevor's school, and already many people accredited him with a B.A. to his name. Philip told no fibs on that or any subject that concerned his position. "When it was necessary," as he said, he was perfectly frank on the subject ; but there are so few occasions on which it is necessary to be explanatory, a modest man does not thrust himself before the notice of the world ; and he was making his way—he was making an impression. Though he had been brought up a Dissenter like his uncle, he had soon seen the entire incompatibility of Sectarianism with

society, and he had now the gratification of hearing himself described as a sound if moderate Churchman. And he was now permanently upon the list of men who were asked to the dinner parties at the Rectory, when single men were wanted to balance a superabundance of ladies, an emergency continually recurring in a country town. This of itself speaks volumes. Philip Rainy was making his way.

He was a slim and fair young man, bearing a family resemblance to his cousin Lucy; and he had always been very "nice" to Lucy and to Jock. He came up to them now to solve all their difficulties, taking Jock's eager hand out of his sister's, and arresting their vehement career.

"Stop here, and I'll put you on my shoulder, Jock; you'll see a great deal better than among the crowd, such a little fellow as you are; and Lucy will talk to me."

They made a very pretty group, as they stood thus at a respectful distance from Punch and his noisy audience, Jock mounted on his cousin's

shoulder clapping his hands and crowing with laughter, while Lucy stood pleased and smiling talking to Philip, who was always so "nice." The passers-by looked at them with an interest which was inevitable in the circumstances. Wherever Lucy went, people looked at her and pointed her out as the heiress, and naturally the young man who was her relation was the subject of many guesses and speculations. To see them standing together was like the suggestion of a romance to all Farafield. Were they in love with each other? Would she marry him? To suppose that Philip, having thus the ball at his foot, should not be "after" the heiress, passed all belief.

But the talk that passed between them, and which suggested so many things to the lookers-on, was of the most placid kind.

"How is my uncle?" Philip asked. Old John Trevor was not his uncle, but the difference between age and youth made the cousinship resolvable into a more filial bond, and it sounded much nearer, which pleased the young man.

“ May I come and see him one of these evenings, Lucy? I am dining out to-day and to-morrow; but Friday perhaps—”

“ How many people you must know!” said Lucy, half admiring, half amused; for young persons at school have a very keen eye for everything that looks like “ showing off.”

“ Yes, I know a good many people—thanks chiefly to you and my uncle.”

“ To me? I don’t know anybody,” said Lucy.

“ But they know you; and to be cousin to a great heiress is a feather in my cap.”

Lucy only smiled; she was neither pleased nor annoyed by the reference, her fortune was so familiar a subject to her. She said, “ Papa will be glad to see you. But I must not stand here in the street, Mrs. Stone will be angry, and I think Jock must have seen enough.”

“ Don’t knock my hat off, Jock; have you seen enough? I will walk with you to the Terrace,” said Philip, and the little family group as they went along the street attracted

a great deal of interest. What more natural than that Philip should be “nice” to his young cousins, and turn with them when he met them on a half holiday? and it is so good to be seen to have relations who are heiresses for a young man who is making his way.

CHAPTER V.

AFTERNOON TALK.

THE children, as they were called in the Terrace, came home just in time for tea. Mr. Trevor had changed the course of his existence for some time past. He who all his life had dined at two, and had tea at six, and "a little something" in the shape of supper before he went to bed, had entirely revolutionized his own existence by the troublesome invention of "late dinner," which Mrs. Ford thought was the suggestion of the Evil One himself. His reason for it was the same as that of many other changes which he had made at some cost to his own comfort, but he did not explain to anyone

what this meant,—at least, if he did explain it, it was to Lucy, and Lucy was the most discreet of confidants. When she came in with her little brother, the Fords were seating themselves at the table in their parlour, on which was the tray and the tea-things, and a large plate of substantial bread and butter. Here Jock took his place with the old people, while Lucy went upstairs. She would have liked the bread and butter too, but her father liked her to spend this hour with him, and he despised the modern invention of five o'clock tea, understanding that meal only, as the Fords did, who made themselves thoroughly comfortable, and had muffins sometimes, and a variety of pleasing adjuncts. Mr. Trevor was still sitting between the fire and the window when Lucy went upstairs. She had taken off her hat and out-door jacket, and went in to her father a spruce, little, grey maiden, with hair as smooth, and everything about her as neat as if she had just come out of a bandbox. In Mr. Trevor's rank of life, there is no personal virtue in a woman that tells like neatness. He

looked at her with eyes full of fond satisfaction and pleasure. He had put away the “Times” from his knees, and now had a book, having finished his paper, which lasted him till about four o’clock, and then went downstairs to Mr. Ford. The books Mr. Trevor read were chiefly travels. He did not think novels were improving to the mind; and as for history and solid information at his age, what was the use of them? they could serve very little purpose in his case; though Lucy ought to read everything that was instructive. He put down his book open, on its face, on his knee when his daughter came in. His eyes dwelt upon her with genuine pleasure and pride as she took the chair in which Ford had been sitting. She had some knitting in her hand, which she began to work at placidly without looking at it. Lucy with her blue eyes, her fair, smooth hair, and her equally smooth grey dress without a crease in it, looked the very impersonation of good order and calm. She looked at her father tranquilly with a pleasant smile. She was no chattering girl with a necessity

of talk upon her. Even among the other girls at Mrs. Stone's, Lucy was never, as Mrs. Ford said, "one to talk." She waited for what should be said to her.

"Well!" said her father rubbing his hands, "and where have you been, Lucy, to-day."

"Up into the High Street, papa."

"I think you are fond of the High Street, Lucy."

"I don't know. The Common is very wet, and Jock will run and jump. I don't like it in this weather. The High Street is dry and clean —at least, it is dry and clean in front of Ratcliffe's shop."

"And there are all the pretty things in the windows."

"I don't look at the things in the windows—what is the good? You would let me buy them all if I wanted them," said Lucy quietly.

"Every one!" said old Trevor with a chuckle. "Every one! you might have a new dress every day of the year, if you liked!"

Lucy smiled, she went on with her knitting.

This delightful possibility did not seem to affect her much—perhaps, because it was a possibility.

“ We met the little Circus boy on his pony.” she said. “ Jock thinks so much of him. Papa, you always let me have everything I want—might I have a pony for Jock. It would make him so happy.”

“ No,” said old Trevor, succinctly. “ For yourself as many as you like; but that sort of thing is not for the child. No, nothing of the sort.”

“ Why ?” she said; with something which in Lucy was impatience and vexation. It was too slight a ruffling of the calm surface to have told at all in anyone else.

“ Because, my dear, Jock must not have anything that is above his own rank in life. What should he do with a pony ? He is not a gentleman’s son to be bred up with foolish notions. It would be all the worse for him to find out the difference afterwards.”

“ But he is my brother,” Lucy said, “ and

your son, papa. If he is not a gentleman's son, neither am I— How is he different from me ? And do you think I can make such a difference when—when I am grown up—”

“ You mean when I am dead ? Say it out ; isn't that what I'm always thinking of ? The little boy, my dear,” said old Trevor gravely, yet with his familiar chuckle breaking in, “ is a mistake. He didn't ought to have been at all, Lucy. Now he's here we can't help it—we've got to put up with it ; and we must make the best of him. We can't send him out of the world because it was a mistake his coming into it ; but he must keep to his own rank in life.”

“ But, papa ! if you would think a little— why should there be such a difference. I so rich—and if he is to have nothing—”

“ He will be as well off as he has any right to be,” said old Trevor. “ I've laid by a little. Don't trouble yourself about Jock. What have you been doing to-day ? That is the thing of the greatest importance. I want to know all my little lady is about.”

“ We had our French lesson,” said Lucy, a little disturbed under her smooth surface; but the disturbance was so little that her father never found it out, “ and—all the rest just as usual, papa.”

“ And can you understand what Mounsheer says? Can you talk to him? I used to know a few words myself—but never to talk it,” said the old man. His acuteness seemed to have deserted him, and turned into the most innocent simplicity—a little glow came upon his face. He was almost childishly excited on this point. “ A few words were enough for me—what did I want with French? though things are altered now; and it’s taught, I’m told, in every commercial academy, and the classics neglected—that wasn’t the way in my time. If a boy learnt anything besides reading and writing, it was Latin—and I was considered very successful with my Latin.”

“ That is another thing, papa,” said Lucy; “ don’t you think Jock should go to school?”

Old Trevor’s face extended slightly. “ Have

you nothing to say to me, Lucy, but about Jock?"

"Oh yes! a great deal," said the girl. She did not lose a single change in his face, though she kept on steadily with her knitting, and she saw it was not safe to go farther. She changed the subject at once. "Monsieur says I get on very well," she said; "but not so well as Katie Russell. She is first in almost everything. She is so clever. You should hear her chatter French—as fast! It is like the birds in the trees, as pretty to listen to—and just as little sense that you can make out."

"Yes, yes, yes!" said the old man with a little impatience. "There is no occasion for *you* to learn like that, Lucy. She has to make her living by it, that girl. I wonder now, you that are in so very different a position, why it's always this Russell girl you talk about, and never any of the real ladies, the Honourable Miss Barringtons and Lady—what do you call her? and the better sort. It was for them I sent

you to Mrs. Stone's school, Lucy," he said with a tone of reproach.

"Yes, papa. I like them very well—they are just like me. They do as little work as they can, and get off everything they can. We had a famous ride—but that was yesterday. I told you about it. Lily Barrington's horse ran away, or we thought it ran away; and mine set off at such a pace! I was dreadfully frightened, but Lily liked it. She had done it on purpose, fancy! and thinks there is nothing in the world so delightful as a gallop."

"And you call her Lily," said Mr. Trevor, with a glow of pleasure, "that's right, my dear. That's what I like to hear. Not that I want you to neglect the others, Lucy; but you can always get a hold on the poor; no fear of them; I want you to secure the great ones too. I want you to know all sorts. You ought to with your prospects. I was saying to Ford to-day, a girl with your prospects belongs to England. The country has an interest in you, Lucy. You ought to know all sorts, rich and poor. That is

just what I have been settling," he said, laying his hand on the blotting book now closed, in which his papers were.

Lucy gave him a little smile, nodding her head. She was evidently quite in the secret of the document there. But she did not stop her knitting, nor was she so much interested in that future which he was settling for her so carefully, as to ask any questions. Her little nod, her smile, which had a kind of indulgence in it, as for the vagaries of a child, her soft calm and indifference bore the strangest contrast to his absorption in all that concerned her. Perhaps the girl did not realise how entirely her future was being mapped out; perhaps she did not realise that future at all. There was a touch of the gentlest youthful contempt for that foolish wisdom of our fathers to which we are all instinctively superior in our youth in her perfect composure. It amused him—though it was so odd that a man should be amused in such a way! and it did not matter any farther to her.

“ Mrs. Stone sent her kind regards, papa, and she will gladly come over and take a cup of tea any time you like,”

“ Oh! she’ll come, will she? I want to tell her of something I’ve put in the will,” said old Mr. Trevor.

This roused Lucy from her composure. She looked at him with a half-startled glance.

“ You will tell—her: of that paper?”

“ Well, not much about it, only something that regards herself. You will be much sought after when I am gone. All sorts of people will be after you for your money; and I want to protect you, Lucy. It’s my business to protect you; besides, as I tell you, you’re too important to have just a couple of guardians like a little girl with ten thousand pounds. You belong to the country, my dear. A fortune like yours,” said the old man, now launched upon his favourite subject, “ is a thing by itself; and I want to protect you, my dear.”

This time Lucy, instead of the smile, breathed a little sigh. It was a sigh of impatience, very

momentary, very slight. This was the doctrine in which she had been brought up, and she would as soon have thought of throwing doubt upon the ten commandments as of denying that her own position made her of almost national importance. She was aware of all that; it was merely the re-iteration of it which moved her to the faintest amount of impatience; but this she very soon repressed.

“Is Mrs. Stone to protect me?” she said.

“She is to be one of them, my dear. You know I don’t wish to do anything in secret, Lucy. I wish you to know all my arrangements. If you came to think afterwards that your father had taken you by surprise, I—should not like it; and now I have got as far as where you ought to live—listen, Lucy,” said the old man. The big document in the writing case was evidently his one idea. His face brightened as he took it up and spread out the large leaves. As for Lucy, she sighed again very softly. How the will wearied her! but she was heroic, or stoical. She made no sort of stand against it;

and after that one soft little protest of nature, went on with her knitting, and listened with great tranquillity. Her father read the paragraphs that he had been consulting Ford about, one by one ; and Lucy listened as if he had been reading a newspaper. It awoke no warmer interest in her mind. She had heard so much of it that it did not affect her in any practical way ; it seemed a harmless amusement for her father, and nothing more.

“ Do you think you shall like going to Lady Randolph, Lucy ? ”

“ How can I tell, papa ? I don’t know Lady Randolph,” Lucy said.

“ No : but that’s high life, my dear ; and here’s humble life, Lucy. I want you to know both ; and as for your marriage, you know—”

“ You do not want me to marry,” said the sensible girl, “ and I don’t think I wish it either, papa. But, if I ever did, it would not be nice to have to go and ask all these people ; and they never would agree. We might be quite sure of that.”

“Then you think I have been hard upon you? Always speak to me quite openly, Lucy. I don’t want to be hard upon you, my child, quite the other way.”

“Oh, it does not matter at all,” said Lucy cheerfully, plying her knitting needles, “I don’t think it is the least likely that I shall ever want to marry; as you have always told me, I shall have plenty to do: and there will be Jock,” she added after a momentary pause.

“You have a great many prejudices about Jock,” her father said testily, “what difference can he make? He has not so very much to do with you, and he will be in quite a different sphere.”

“Do you want me to have nobody belonging to me?” Lucy cried with a sudden vivacity not without indignation in it: then subdued herself as suddenly. “It doesn’t at all matter,” she said.

“And you remember,” said her father almost humbly, “this is only till you are five-and-twenty. It is not for all eternity; you will have

plenty of time to marry, or do whatever you please, after that."

Lucy nodded and smiled once more, "I don't think I shall want to marry," she said; but while she spoke she was making a quiet calculation of quite a different character. "Jock is eight and I am seventeen," she was saying within herself, "how old will Jock be when I am twenty-five?" It does not seem a difficult question; but she was not great in arithmetic, and it took her a moment or two to make it out. When she had succeeded her face brightened up, "Still young enough to be educated," she added always within herself, and this quite restored her patience and her cheerfulness.

"It will be very funny," she said, "to see the Rector and Mr. Williamson consulting together. I wonder how they will begin: I am sure Mr. Williamson will put on coloured clothes to show how independent he is; and the Doctor—the Doctor will smile and rub his hands."

“ You forget,” said old Trevor with a slight sharpness of tone, though he laughed, “ that such things have been as that I should outlive the Doctor. He’s younger than I am, to be sure, but I would not have you to calculate on my death before the Doctor. It might be quite a different Rector. It might be a young man that would, perhaps, put in claims to the heiress himself. But I’ll give you one piece of advice, Lucy, beforehand. Never marry a parson. They’re always in the way. Other kinds of men have their occupations ; but a parson with a rich wife is always lounging about. Your mother used to say so ; and she was a very sensible woman. She had an offer from one of the chapel ministers when she was young ; but she would have nothing to say to him. A man in slippers, always in-doors, was what she never could abide.”

“ I don’t think the Rector would be like that, papa,” said Lucy, “ he doesn’t look as if he ever wore slippers at all—”

“ Well, perhaps it is the other kind I am

thinking of," said Mr. Trevor, who had not much acquaintance with the class which he called "Church parsons," though his liberality of mind was such that he had brought up Lucy partially, at least, as a Church-woman. His conduct, in this respect, was much the same as it was in reference to the distinctions of society. He wanted her to have her share in all—to be familiar alike with poverty and riches, and as a kind of moral consequence with Church and Chapel too.

It was almost a disappointment to the old man that Lucy let the subject drop, and showed no farther interest in it. He was a great deal more excited about her future life than she was. Lucy's life was, indeed, to her father, at once, his great object and his pet plaything. It was his determination that it should be such a life as no one had ever lived before; a perfection of beneficence, wisdom, well-doing, and general superiority. He wanted to guard her against all perils, to hedge her round from every enemy. Unfortunately, he knew very little of the world

the dangers of which he was so intent on avoiding ; but he was quite unaware of his own ignorance. He foresaw the well-known danger of fortune-hunters ; but he did not perceive the impossibilities of the arrangement by which he had, he flattered himself, so carefully and cleverly guarded against them. In this respect, Lucy had more insight than her father, in her gentle indifference. Her life was not a matter of theory to Lucy. It was not a thing at all to be moulded and formed by anyone ; it was to-day and to-morrow. She listened to, without being affected by, all her father's plans for her. They seemed a dream—a story to her ; the future to which they referred was quite unreal in her eyes.

“ We met Philip, papa,” she said, after a pause, with her usual tranquillity. “ He is always very nice to Jock. He put him upon his shoulder to see the ‘Punch.’ And he says he is coming to see you.”

“ You met Philip,” said the old man. “ And he is coming to see me ? Well, let him come, Lucy. He is a rising man, and a fine gentle-

man—too fine for a homely old man like me. But we are not afraid of Philip. Let him come: and let us hope he will find his match when he comes here."

" You do not like Philip, papa? I think he is the only person you are—not quite just to. What has he done? He is always very nice to Jock, and—" Lucy added hastily in a tone of conciliation, " to me too."

" Done?" said the old man with a snarl in place of his usual chuckle. " He has done nothing but what is virtuous. He has doubled the school, and he sets up for being a gentleman. Don't you know that I have the highest opinion of Philip? I always say so; the best of young men—and he calls me uncle, though he is only my wife's distant cousin, which is very condescending of him. Not to approve of Philip would be to show myself a prejudiced old fool—and—" Mr. Trevor added after a pause, showing his old teeth in yellow ferocity, not unmixed with humour, " that is exactly what I am."

Lucy looked at him with her peaceful blue eyes.

She shook her head in mild disapproval. "He is very nice to Jock—and to me too," she repeated softly. But she made no further defence of her cousin. This was all she said.

CHAPTER VI.

PHILIP.

PHILIP RAINY was, as his relation had been obliged to avow, an excellent young man ; there was nothing to be found fault with in his moral character, and everything to be applauded in his manners and habits. He had acquired his education in the most laborious way, at the cheapest possible rate, and he had used it, since he was in a condition to do so, in the most admirable manner. He was intelligent and amiable as well as prudent and ambitious, and though he meant to establish a reputation for himself, and a position among those who were considered best in Farafield, yet he never forgot

his family, whom he had left behind ; nor, though he did not think it necessary to brag that he had begun the world in the lowliest way, did he ever, when it was called for, shrink from an avowal of his origin, humble as that was. Why old Mr. Trevor should dislike him it would be difficult to say, or rather, though it might be easy enough to divine the causes, it would be almost impossible to offer any justification of them. Old Trevor disliked the young man because—he was so altogether unexceptionable a young man. Every inducement that could have led an old man to patronize and encourage a young one existed here, and yet these very reasons why he should like Philip made his old relation dislike him. He was too good, and, alas, too successful. He had doubled the school in Kent's Lane, which the old gentleman, distracted by other occupations, had brought down very low indeed, and this was something which it was rather hard to forgive, though it was worthy of nothing but praise. And he was Lucy's cousin, on the side of the house from

which the fortune came, and perfectly suitable to Lucy in point of age, and in almost every way. How much trouble it would have avoided, how much ease and security it would have given, if Philip had been placed in Lucy's way and an attachment encouraged between them ! It would have been the most natural thing in the world ; it would have restored the fortune to the name, it would have enriched the family of the original possessor, it would have saved all the trouble of the will which old Trevor was elaborating with so much care. Therefore it was that old Trevor detested Philip Rainy, or, at least, was so near detesting him that only Christian principle prevented that climax of feeling. As it was, with a distinct effort because the sentiment was wrong, the old man restrained his conscious dislike of the young one within the bounds of what he considered permissible hostility. But all he could do, could not entirely control that fierce impulse of repugnance. He could not keep his voice from altering, his expression from changing, when Philip Rainy's name was mentioned.

Perhaps, at the bottom of all his anxiety about Lucy's fortune, and his desire to shape and control her actions, was an underlying dread that Lucy's fate might be lying quite near, and might be decided at any moment before ever his precautions could come into effect.

Philip himself had no conception how far the dislike of his uncle—as he called old Trevor, without being in the least aware that this of itself was an offence—went. He did not even know that it was only to himself that the old man was so systematically ill-tempered. It was seldom he saw old Trevor in the society of other people, and he took it for granted, with much composure, that the sharpness of his jibes and the keenness of his criticisms were natural, and employed against the world in general as well as against himself. Being a young man determined to rise in the world, it was not to be supposed that he had not taken the whole question of his family connections into earnest consideration, or that he was entirely unmoved by the consciousness that within his reach, and accessible to him

in many ways not possible for other men, was one of the greatest prizes imaginable, an heiress, whose soft little hand could raise him at once above all the chance of good or evil fortune, and confer upon him a position far beyond anything that was within his possibilities in any other way. On this latter point, however, he was not at all clear ; for Philip was young, and had not learned to know these inexorable limits which hem in possibility. He thought he could do a great many things by his unaided powers, which he would have easily seen to be impossible for anyone else. He believed in occasions arising which would give scope to his talents, and show the world what manner of man it was which the irony of fate confined to the humble occupation of a schoolmaster in a little country town ; and he entertained no doubt that when the occasion came he would show himself worthy of it. Therefore he was not sure that Lucy's fortune could do much more for him than he could do for himself ; but he was too sensible to ignore the difference it would make in his start, the great

assistance it would be in his career. It would give him an advantage of ten years, he said to himself, in the musings of that self-confidence which was so determined and arrogant, yet so simple; a difference of ten years—that stands for a great deal in a man's life. To attain that at thirty which in ordinary circumstances you would only attain at forty, is an advantage which is worthy many sacrifices; but yet, at the same time, if you are sure of attaining at forty, or by good luck at thirty-nine, the good fortune on which your mind is set, it is not perhaps worth your while to make a very serious sacrifice of your self-esteem or pride merely for the sake of saving these ten years. This was why Philip maintained with ease so dignified and worthy a position in respect to his heiress-cousin. She would make a difference of ten years—but that was all; and besides being a young man determined to get on in the world, he was a young man who gave himself credit for fine feelings, and independence of mind, and generosity of sentiment. He could not, at this early stage

of his existence, have come to a mercenary decision, and made up his mind to marry for money. He did not see any necessity for it; he felt quite able to encounter fate in his own person; therefore, though he did not refuse to acknowledge that it would be a very good thing to marry an heiress, and very pleasant if the woman with whom he fell in love should belong to that class, he had not proposed to himself the idea either of trying to fall in love with Lucy, or attempting to secure her affections to himself. The idea of her hovered before his mind as a possibility—but there were many other possibilities hovering before Philip, and some more enticing, more attractive, than any heiress. Therefore he did not spoil his own prospects by perpetual visits, or by paying her anything that could be called “attention” in the phraseology of the drawing-room. His relations with her were no more than cousinly; he was very “nice;” but then he was even more “nice” to little Jock, who was not his relation at all, than to Lucy. It was part of his admirable character that he

was fond of children, and always good to them, so that no suspicion could possibly attach to the very moderate amount of intercourse which was conducted on so reasonable a footing. But the more it was reasonable, the more it was cousinly, the more did old Trevor dislike his child's relation; he had not the slightest ground for fault-finding, therefore his secret wrath was nursed in secret, and grew and increased. It was all he could do to receive Philip with civility when he came. He came in after dinner in a costume carefully adapted to please, or at least to disarm all objections, a compromise between morning and evening dress; and he made judicious inquiries after the old man's health, not too much, as if there was anything special in his solicitude, but as much as mingled politeness and family affection required.

“I hope you are standing the cold pretty well, Sir,” he said; “spring is always so trying. I can bear the winter better myself; at all events, one does not expect anything better in December, and one makes up one's mind to it.”

“At your age,” said old Trevor, “it was all the same to me, December or July; I liked the one as much as the other. But I think we might find something better to talk of than the weather; every idiot does that.”

“That is true,” said the young man, “it is always the first topic among English people. With our uncertain climate——”

“I never was out of England, for my part,” the old man interrupted him sharply. “English climate is the only climate I know anything about. I don’t pretend to be superior to it, like you folks that talk of Italy and so forth. What have I got to do with Italy? It may be warmer, but warm weather never agreed with me.”

“I have never been out of England either,” said the young man, with that persistence in the soft word that turns away wrath, which is of all things in the world the most provoking to irritable people; and then he changed the subject gently, but not to his own advantage. “I thought you would like to hear, Uncle, how

well everything is going on in Kent's Lane. I am thinking of an assistant, the boys are getting beyond my management; indeed, if things go on as they are doing, I shall soon have enough to do managing, without teaching at all. I have heard of a very nice fellow, a University man. Don't you think that on the whole that would be an advantage? people think so much more, nowadays,—for the mere teaching, you know, only for the teaching—of a man with a degree."

"A man with a fiddlestick!" said old Trevor. "The question is, are you going into competition with Eton and Harrow, Mr. Philip Rainy, or are you the master of a Commercial Academy? that's the question. The man that founded that establishment hadn't got a degree, no, nor wouldn't have accepted one if they had gone on their knees to him. He knew his place, and the sort of thing that was expected from him. Oh, surely, get your man with a degree! or go and buy a degree for yourself (it's a matter of fees more than anything else, I have always heard,) and starve when you have got it. But I'd like

you to hand over Kent's Lane first to somebody that will carry it on as it used to be."

"I beg your pardon with all my heart, Uncle," cried the young man. "I have not the least intention of abandoning Kent's Lane. It's my sheet-anchor, all I have in the world: and I would not alter the character you stamped upon it for any inducement. The only thing is, that so much more attention is paid to the classics nowadays——"

"Curse nowadays, Sir!" cried old Trevor, his countenance glowing with anger. Then he pulled himself up, and recollected that such language was far from becoming to his age and dignity, not to speak of his Christian principles. "I shouldn't have said that," he added in a subdued tone; "I don't wan't to curse anything. Still I don't know what the times are coming to with all these absurd novelties. The classics (he had been boasting of his Latin an hour before) for a set of shop-keepers' sons that want to know how to add up their fathers' books! It's folly and nonsense, that's what it is. Even if

you could do it, what's the advantage of snipping all classes out on the same pattern? It's a great deal better to have a little difference. Women, too—you'd clip them all out like images in paper, the same shape as men. It's a pity," he added grimly, "that your classics and your degrees don't do more for those that have got them. Many an M.A. I've seen in my time tacked to the names of the biggest fools I've ever known."

"Still it is not necessary to be a big fool, Sir, because you are an M.A.," said Philip, always mildly, but with a sigh. "It is a great advantage to a man: I wish I had it. I know what you will say, better men than I have not had it; but just because I am not a better man—"

For the first time old Trevor broke into his habitual chuckle. "Give him some tea, Lucy," he said. "I suppose you're one of the fashionable kind and have your dinner when I used to have my supper. That's not the way to thrive, my lad."

“What does it matter whether you call it dinner or supper, Sir?” said Philip, “and pardon me, don’t you do the same?”

“It makes a deal of difference,” said the old man. “Parents like to hear that you have your tea at six o’clock, and your supper at nine, like themselves. They don’t like you to give yourself airs, as if you were better than they are. You’re a clever fellow, Philip Rainy, and you think you are getting on like a house on fire. But you’re a fool all the same.”

“Papa, I wish you would not be so uncivil,” said Lucy, who had as yet taken no part in their talk.

“I tell you he’s a fool all the same. I kept Kent’s Lane a-going for thirty years, and I ought to know. I’ve taught the best men in the town. Oxford fellows, and Cambridge fellows, and all sorts, have come to me for their mathematics, though I never had a degree; and I ate my dinner at two and my tea at six as regular as clock-work all the time. That’s the way to do, if you mean to keep it up all your life, and

lay by a little money, and leave the place to your son after you. If Jock had been older that's what I should have made him do ; that is the way to succeed in Kent's Lane."

There was a little pause after this, for Philip was a little angry too, and had not command for the moment of that soft word of which he made so determined a use ; and at the same time he was resolved not to quarrel with Lucy's father. He said, after a while, in as easy a tone as he could assume,

"I wish you would let me have Jock. He is old enough for school now, and whatever you want to do with him I could always begin his education ; of course, you will give him every advantage——"

"I will give him as good as I had myself, Philip, and as you had. Do you think I am going to take Lucy's money for that child ? Not a penny ! He shall be bred up according to his own rank in life ; and by the time he's a man, you'll have grown too grand for the old place, and you can hand it over to him."

Philip opened his eyes in spite of himself.

“Then Lucy will be a great lady,” he said, half laughing, “and her brother a little schoolmaster in Kent’s Lane.”

Lucy, who was standing behind her father at the moment, began to make the most energetic signs of dissent. She made her mouth into a puckered circle of inarticulate “No-o-s,” and shook her head with vehement contradiction. Just below, and all unconscious of this pantomime, the old man grinned upon his visitor, delighted with the opportunity at once of declaring his intentions and of inflicting a salutary snub.

“That is exactly what I intend,” he said, “you have hit it. Even if it hadn’t been just, it would have been a fine thing to do as an example; but it is *just* as well. Is a fine lady any better than a poor schoolmaster? not a bit! each one in the rank of life that is appointed, and one as good as another: that’s always been my principle. I wouldn’t have stepped out of

my rank of life, or the habits of my rank of life, not if you had given me thousands for it ; not, I promise you," cried old Trevor, with a snarl, "for the sake of being asked to dinner here and there, as some folks are ; but being in my own rank of life I thought myself as good as the King : and that's why Lucy shall be a great lady and her brother a little schoolmaster, whether or not he's in Kent's Lane."

"But he shall not be so, papa, if I can help it," Lucy said.

"You won't be able to help it, my pet," said her father, relapsing into a chuckle, "not you, nor anyone else ; that's one thing of which I can make sure."

The two young people looked at each other over his old head. They made no telegraphic signs this time. Philip was for the moment overawed by the old man's determination, while Lucy, the most dutiful of daughters, was mute in a womanly confidence of somehow or other finding a way to balk him. She had not in the least realized how her life was to be bound

and limited by the imperious will of the father who grudged her nothing ; but Lucy accepted it all quite tranquilly, whatever it might be—except this. When she went with her cousin to the door, she confided to him the one exception to her purposes of obedience.

“Papa does not think what he is saying ; I never believe him when he talks like that. I to be rich and Jock poor ! He only says it for fun, Philip, don’t you think ?”

“It does not look much like fun,” Philip said, with a rueful shake of his head.

“Well ! but old people—old people are very strange ; they think a thing is a joke that does not seem to us at all like a joke. I will do all that papa wishes, but not about Jock.”

“And I hope you won’t let him persuade you to think,” said Philip, lingering with her hand in his to say good night, “that I am neglecting my work, or giving myself airs, or——”

“Oh, that is only his fun,” said Lucy, nodding her head to him with a pleasant smile as he went out into the night.

She was not pretty, he thought, as he walked away, but her face was very soft, and round, and pleasant; her blue eyes very steady and peaceful, with a calmness in them which, in its way, represented power. Philip, who was, though so steady, somewhat excitable, and apt to be fretted and worried, felt that the repose in her was consolatory and soothing. She would be good to come home to after a man had been baited and bullied in the world. He had thought her an insignificant little girl, but to-night he was not so sure that she was insignificant; and Philip did not know anything at all about the will and its iron rod.

CHAPTER VII.

THE WHITE HOUSE.

THE life of Lucy Trevor, at this period, was divided between two worlds, very dissimilar in constitution. The odd household over which her father's will and pleasure was paramount, though exercised through the medium of Mrs. Ford, and in which so many out of the way subjects were continually being discussed, all with some personal reference to the old man and his experiences and crotchety principles of action, occupied one part of her time and thoughts; but the rest of her belonged to another sphere—to the orderly circle of studies and amusements of which the central figure was Mrs. Stone, and

the scene the White House, a large irregular low building on the edge of the Common, which was within sight of Mr. Trevor's windows in the Terrace, and had appeared, through all the mist and fog of those wintry days, with a kind of halo round its whiteness like that of a rainy and melancholy old moon, tumbled from its high place to the low levels of a damp and flat country. Mrs. Stone's was known far and wide as the best school for a hundred miles round, the best as far as education was concerned, and also the most exclusive and aristocratic. Lucy Trevor was the only girl in Farafield who was received as a day pupil. Efforts had been made by people of the highest local standing to procure the admission of other girls of well-known families in the town, but in vain. And why Mrs. Stone had taken Lucy, who was nobody, who was only old John Trevor's daughter, was a mystery to her best friends. She had offended a great many of the townspeople, but she had flattered the local aristocracy, the county people, by her exclusiveness; and she offended both by the

sudden relaxation of her rule on behalf of Lucy. The Rector's daughter would have been a thousand times more eligible, or even Emmy Rushton, whose mother had knocked at those jealous doors in vain for years together; and why should she have taken Lucy Trevor, old John's daughter, who was nobody, who had not the faintest pretension to gentility? Lady Langton drove in, as a kind of lofty deputation and representative of the other parents who had daughters at Mrs. Stone's school, to remonstrate with her, and procure the expulsion of the intruder; but Mrs. Stone was equal to the occasion. She did not hesitate to say to the Countess: "Your ladyship is at liberty to remove Lady Maud whenever you please. I dispense with the three months' notice."

It was this speech which established Mrs. Stone's position far more than her excellence in professional ways. A woman who dared to look a Countess in the face, and make such a suggestion, was too wonderful a person to be contemplated save with respect and awe. Lady

Langton herself withdrew, abashed and confounded, protesting that to take Maud away was the last idea in her mind. And Mrs. Stone's empire was thus established. The incident made a great impression on the county generally. And it nearly threw into a nervous fever the other mistress, conjointly with Mrs. Stone, of the White House, her sister Miss Southwood (called, as a matter of course, Southernwood by the girls), who stood by aghast, and heard her say : “ I dispense with the three months' notice ; ” and expected nothing less than that the sky should fall, and the walls crumble in round them. Miss Southwood liked to think afterwards that it was her own deprecating glances, her look of horror and dismay, and, above all, the cup of exquisite tea which she offered Lady Langton as she waited for her carriage which put everything straight ; but all her civilities would never have established that moral ascendancy which her sister's uncompromising defiance secured.

Miss Southwood was the elder of the two.

She was forty-five or thereabouts, and she was old-fashioned. Whether it was by calculation, to make a claim of originality for herself, such as it was, or simply because she thought that style becoming to her, nobody knew; but she dressed in the fashions which had been current in her youth, and never changed. She wore her hair in a knot fastened by a high comb behind, and with little ringlets drooping on either cheek; and, amid the long and sweeping garments of the present era, wore a full plain skirt which did not touch the ground, and *gigot* sleeves. In this dress she went about the house softly and briskly, without the whisking and rustling of people in long trains. She was a very mild person in comparison with her high-spirited and despotic sister; but yet was gifted with a gentle obstinacy, and seldom permitted any argument to beguile her from her own way. She had, nominally, the same power in the house as Mrs. Stone, and it was partly her money which was put in peril by her sister's audacity; but the elder had always been faithful to the younger,

and though she might grumble, never failed to make common cause with her, even in her most heroic measures. As for Lucy Trevor, though she shook her head, she submitted, feeling that to suffer on behalf of an heiress was a pain from which the worst sting was taken out; for it was not to be supposed that a girl so rich could allow her schoolmistress to come to harm on her account. Mrs. Stone was far more imposing in appearance. She was full five years younger, and she was not old-fashioned. She was tall, with a commanding figure, and her dresses were handsome as herself, made by an *artiste* in town, not by the bungling hands of the trade in Far-afield, of rich texture, and the most fashionable cut. She was a woman of speculative and theoretical mind, believing strongly in “influence,” and very anxious to exercise it when an opportunity occurred. She had her ideas, as Mr. Trevor had, of what might be made of an heiress; and it seemed to Mrs. Stone that there was no class in the world upon which “influence” might tell more, or be more beneficially exer-

cised. Her ideas on this subject laid her open to various injurious suppositions. Thus, when she took Lady Maud Langdale into her bosom, as it were—moved by a brilliant hope of influence to be exercised on society itself by means of a very pretty and popular young woman of fashion—vulgar bystanders accused Mrs. Stone of tuft-hunting, and of paying special honour to the girl who was the daughter of an Earl, out of mere love of a title, an altogether unworthy representation of her real motive. And her sudden stand on behalf of Lucy took the world by surprise. They could not fathom her meaning: that she should have defied the Countess, whom up to this time she had been supposed to worship with a servile adulation, on account of a little bit of a girl of no particular importance was incomprehensible. It was known in Farafield that Lucy had a fortune, but it was not known how great that fortune was, and after much groping among the motives possible to Mrs. Stone in the circumstances, the country-town gossips had come to the conclusion

that she aspired to a marriage with old John Trevor, and an appropriation to herself of all his wealth. This supplied a sufficient reason even for a breach with the Countess. To be asked to Langdale, which was the finest thing that could happen to her in connection with Lady Maud, was, though gratifying, not to be compared with the possibility of marrying a rich man in her own person, and becoming one of the chief ladies of Farafield. This was how it was accounted for by that chorus of spectators who call themselves society, and Miss Southwood herself entertained, against her will, the same opinion. This suggestion seemed to make everything clear.

A few days after that on which Mr. Trevor read to Ford the last paragraph which he had added to his will, Lucy tapped at the door of Mrs. Stone's private parlour with her father's message. The ladies were seated together in their private sanctuary, resting from their labours. It was a seclusion never invaded by the pupils except on account of some important

commission from a parent, or to ask advice, or by order of its sovereigns. Lucy came in with the little old-fashioned curtsey which Mrs. Stone insisted upon, and made her request.

“If you would come to tea to-morrow night. Papa is very sorry, but he bids me say he thinks you know that he cannot come to you.”

“How is Mr. Trevor, Lucy?”

Miss Southwood, who was looking at her sister anxiously, thought she asked this question by way of gaining time. Could he have sent for her in order to propose to her, the anxious sister thought. What a very curious way of proceeding! but a rich old man, with one foot in the grave, could not be expected to act like other men.

“He is—just as he always is: very busy, always writing; but he cannot go out, and if you would be so kind——”

“Oh, yes, I will be so kind,” said Mrs. Stone, with a smile; “it is not the first time, Lucy.

Is he going to complain of you, or to tell me of something he wants for you?"

"I think," said Lucy, "it is about the will."

"Dear me!" Miss Southwood cried. "What can you have to do, Maria, with Mr. Trevor's will?"

Mrs. Stone smiled again.

"He goes on with it, then, as much as ever?" she said.

"Oh, yes, almost more than ever; it gives him a great deal of occupation," said Lucy, with a grave face. There were some things that she had it in her heart to say on this subject; she looked at the schoolmistress anxiously, not knowing if she might trust her, and then was silent, fearing to open her mind to anyone on the subject of Jock.

"Poor child! he is putting a great burden upon you at your age; the management of a fortune is too much for a girl; but, Lucy, you will always know where to find advice and help so far as I can give it. You must never hesitate

to come to me, whatever happens," Mrs. Stone said.

"Thank you," said Lucy, in her tranquil way. She had read something in the schoolmistress's face, she could not have told what, which sealed her lips in respect to Jock.

"Dear me!" cried Miss Southwood again, "you are both very mysterious; I should think nothing was easier than to manage a fortune. It is when one has no fortune that life is difficult to manage," she said with a sigh.

"The wonder is," said Mrs. Stone, calmly ignoring her sister's interruption, "that your father does not carry out some of his own views, Lucy, instead of leaving everything to you. It would be in your favour if he would take a larger house, and get together an establishment more befitting your prospects; I think I shall suggest this to him. He has always been very civil in listening to my suggestions. A proper establishment, all set in order in his lifetime, would be a great matter for you."

“But, Maria, Maria!” cried Miss Southwood, “think, for Heaven’s sake! what you are doing; think what people will say. That *you* should suggest such a thing would never do.”

Mrs. Stone turned round and looked at her with scathing indifference.

“What do people say?” she asked, and went on without waiting for an answer. “You ought to be living as becomes your future position,” she said; “the associations you will form at present, and the habits you are acquiring, cannot be good for you. Thank heaven you are here, my dear child, in a place which, however homely, is intended as a place of training for girls who have to occupy high positions.”

“I don’t think it will matter for me,” said Lucy; “I shall never be a great lady, I shall only be rich. No one will expect so very much from me.”

“They will expect a great deal, and I hope my pupil will do me credit,” said Mrs. Stone; and she rose up and kissed Lucy with a little

enthusiasm. "I agree with your father, I think there is a great deal in you, Lucy ; but I don't agree with him as to the best means of bringing it out. He thinks that you should be plunged into life all of a sudden, and a great call made upon you ; but I believe in education ; we shall soon see who is right."

"Oh, I hope not," cried Lucy, "I hope not ; for before you can know anything about it papa will have to be—"

"Not if he takes my way, Lucy ; he ought to take Holmwood, that pretty house near Sir Thomas Randolph's, and give you a beginning ; and I think he ought to do some of the things in his will which he is talking of leaving upon you ; I will speak to him to-morrow night. Yes, you can say I will come ; but do not think too much of these serious matters ; go and amuse yourself with your companions, my dear."

"Maria," said Miss Southwood, when the door closed, "you think yourself a great deal wiser than I am, but you must hear what I

have to say. If you go and advise that old man to take Holmwood and set up an establishment, there will be but one thing that anybody can think. If you care anything for the opinion of the world, or for my opinion, for heaven's sake don't do it, don't do it! a woman in your position has need to be so careful. Of course, it stands to reason *that* is what everybody will think."

"*What* is what everybody——? Your style in conversation is very careless," said Mrs. Stone, with great indifference. But her counsellor would not be put down.

"I will tell you exactly what will be thought," she said, solemnly. "What is the common talk already? that you mean to marry that old man. Why did you take up the girl, risking your whole connection? You that have always been so exclusive—a girl of no family at all! you must have had a motive, no one ever acts without a motive; and, perhaps if he is very rich, and you could be sure of carrying it out—— But how do we know that he is really very rich? and

most likely you will not be able to carry it out: and at your age to risk your reputation—oh, I don't mean in any *wrong* way—but to risk your character for sense and good taste, and all that! Consider for one moment, consider, Maria, what the 'parents' would say, what the parents would have a right to say!"

"If you think that I am to be kept in order by a threat of what 'parents' will think!" said Mrs. Stone. "Do you suppose I will ever give in to parents? why, it would be our destruction. But make your mind easy, I don't mean to marry old Trevor, and he does not mean to ask me. Listen! you don't know what you are talking about. That girl whom you think nothing of, that girl you are always taunting me about: and she is a very nice girl, as simple as a daisy and as true—— Listen, Ellen! she will be the Greatest Heiress in England one of these days."

Miss Southwood stood and listened with all her soul, her eyes and her mouth opening wider and wider, her imagination set suddenly on fire,

for she had an imagination, and that of a most practical kind. The greatness of Lucy's fortune had never been so plainly set before her. She was so much taken by surprise that she spoke with a gasp, as if all her breath and energy were thrown into the question.

“And what do you mean to do?”

“I mean to manage her, if I can, for her own good, and for the good of her fellow-creatures,” cried Mrs. Stone, excited too. “Power, that is what I have always wanted. I know I can use it well, and Lucy is a good girl, good to the bottom of her heart. She will want to do good with her money: and money, money is power.”

Miss Southwood listened, but she did not share her sister's enthusiasm. Her countenance fell into shades of disapproval and impatience. She shook her head.

“You were always so high-flown,” she said. “I never saw anything come of these heiresses. Manage her! you ought to know by this time girls are not such easy things to manage. But

there is a much better thing you can do, marry her! and that will be good for her and us.

Mrs. Stone looked at her sister with a smile which was somewhat supercilious.

“ That is, of course, your first idea ; and how, if I may ask, would such an expedient be good for us ? if I thought of good for us—which is a thing that never entered my thoughts——”

“ Because you have no family affection, Maria. I have always said it of you. You think of the girl more than of your own relations. How is it possible,” asked Miss Southwood severely, “ that you could have any hand in the disposal of an heiress and not think of Frank ?”

CHAPTER VIII.

EXPLANATIONS.

LUCY went home a little impressed by what Mrs. Stone had said. It had never occurred to her before to think of anything but her father's will and pleasure in the matter, or to suppose that she had anything to do but to acquiesce in his arrangements; but when the idea was put into her head, it commended itself to her reasonable mind. If he were, at least, to begin to do some of the things which he had by his will commanded her to do, what an ease and comfort it would be! and she could not but think that it would be a relief to himself, as well as for her, could he be made, as Mrs. Stone suggested, to

see it in this way. In the first place, it would obviate on his part all necessity for dying, which, at present, was the initial requirement, the one thing needful, before any of his regulations could be carried out. Why should he die? She could not but perceive, as she thought over the whole subject dispassionately, according to her nature, that from his own point of view it would be a mistake if his life were prolonged. The whole scheme was based upon his death. So long as he did not die it was a mere imagination. And why should this be? far better to get over this fundamental necessity by changing the construction of his plan altogether, and begin to carry out his wishes himself. When they were sitting together in the afternoon, which was wet and dull, the idea took a stronger hold upon her, and it was when Mr. Trevor was actually writing down something new that had occurred to him, that her thoughts came the length of speech. She looked up from her knitting, and he stopped, with the pen in his hand, and, looking round upon her,

listened with a smile to what Lucy might have to say.

“Why should you take all this trouble, papa?” she said suddenly. “I have been thinking; and this is what I feel sure of, that it should all be altered. You are not ill, or likely to die. Instead of writing out all these orders for me, would it not be much better if you would put that paper aside and do the things you have put into it yourself?”

He looked at her over the top of his spectacles with an air of consternation.

“Do the things myself! what things?” he said, then paused and pushed his spectacles up on his forehead, and gazed at her almost fiercely with his small keen eyes. “That paper!” he repeated, “do you mean the will, my will, Lucy?” The tone in which he spoke was as if it had been the British Constitution which Lucy proposed to set aside.

“Yes,” she said. “You see, papa, I shall be very young, I shall not have very much sense.”

"You have a great deal of sense, Lucy," he said, mollified, "far more than most girls. Providence has made you for the work you have got to do."

"But, papa," she said, "I shall be very young; it will be very hard upon me to decide what is to be done with all that money, and to give and not to give. It will be very hard. How should I know which are the right people? I should either want to give to everybody or to nobody. I should throw it away, or I should be too frightened to make any use of it at all."

"That will be impossible," said old Trevor, with a nod of satisfaction; "I have taken precautions about that."

"Then I should give foolishly, papa."

"Very likely, my dear, very likely; everyone has to pay for his own experience. It is a very dear commodity, Lucy; I can't give you mine, you must get it for yourself, and it has always, always to be paid for. There is no question about that."

“But, papa, would it not be a great deal better—you who have this experience, who have paid for it and got it—instead of living quietly here as if you were nobody, to do it all yourself?”

The old man laughed.

“There, you have hit it, Lucy,” he said, “there, you have hit it, my dear. I live quietly, as if I were nobody—and I am nobody—that is exactly the state of affairs.”

“But—” she cried, with great surprise and indignation, “if you mean nobody in family, then neither am I; but the money, the money is all yours to do with it whatever you please.”

Once more he laughed, and chuckled, and lost his breath, and coughed before he could recover it again; and whether it was the laughing, or the coughing, or something else, Lucy could not tell, but the water stood in his eyes.

“You are mistaken, Lucy, you are mistaken,” he said. “You must understand the truth, my dear; neither am I anyone to speak of, nor is

the money mine. I have made a little in my life—oh, very little—a poor schoolmaster's earnings, what are they? nothing to make a fuss about. I've put my little savings away for Jock, you know that. A few thousand pounds, just as much as will give him a start in the world, if it is well taken care of."

"Papa, you ought to give Jock the half," said Lucy, reproachfully, "it is not fair that he should have nothing, and that all should come to me."

"Listen to her!" said the old man, "first telling me to spend it myself, and then to give half to the boy. Nothing of the sort, Lucy; I know what justice is, and I mean to do it. Do you think I could take poor Lucilla's money to make that brat a gentleman? Why, it's a kind of insult to her, poor thing, that he's there at all. I don't say a word against his mother, Lucy, but I always felt I never ought to have married her. I was not like a young man, I was middle-aged even before I married poor

Lucilla, and I had no business to have the other ; it was a mistake, it was an affront to your poor mother. People say that you show how happy you've been with the first when you get a second, but I don't go in with that. When I think of facing these two women and not knowing which I belong to, I—I don't like it, Lucy. Lucilla was always very considerate, and made great allowances, but there are things a woman can't be expected to put up with, and I don't like the thought."

The humour and half-ludicrous pathos of this explanation, which was made between a laugh and a sob, was lost upon Lucy, who was altogether taken by surprise, and whose sense of humour was but little developed. She gazed at him with her eyes a little more widely opened than usual, not knowing what to say. Had she been a more experienced person, no doubt she would have consoled him with the reflection that husbands and wives, as we are told, do not stand exactly on the same footing in the next world. But she did not feel capable of saying

anything in opposition to this matter-of-fact compunction ; it has much in it which commends itself to the unsophisticated. She only gazed at her father, seeing difficulties in the way of his exit from the world which she had never thought of before.

“ But that is neither here nor there,” he said, with his usual chuckle much subdued. “ It is only to explain to you why I won’t give anything but my own savings to Jock. I have often told you so before—but now you know the reason why.”

Lucy was silent for a time, pondering over all this—then she said in the same serious tone. “ But, papa, I don’t see that what you have said is any answer to my question. I want to know why you should live here so quietly and save, and leave everything to me to do—when it would be so much better to do it yourself.”

“ Some one has put this into your head.”

“ No—only something set me thinking—why shouldn’t you, papa? take a great house instead

of this; and have carriages and servants, and do all these things—giving and endowing, and building and setting up, that you want me to do—”

The old man laughed with less complication of sentiment than before. “I should make a fine country gentleman,” he said, “to sit down and hob and nob with the Earl and Lord Barrington, and Sir John and Sir Thomas. What should I do with grand carriages, that never go outside these four walls—or with men-servants when I can’t bear the sight of ’em. No, no! and I shouldn’t like it, neither. I can put it all down on paper for you; but I shouldn’t like to do it myself. I like to stick to the money, Lucy. I like to lay it up, and see it grow—that’s my pleasure in life. It makes me happy when the stocks go up. Interest and compound interest, that’s what pleases me.”

“But, papa,” said Lucy, astonished, “*that* is all quite different,” she nodded her head towards the will always lying in the blotting-case within reach of his hand. “There it is all spending

and giving; over and over again you say there is to be no hoarding up, no putting by."

"Ah!" said old Trevor, rubbing his hands with enjoyment, "that is for you! that is a different thing altogether. When I've had my own way all my life, down to the last moment, why, then you shall have yours."

"How can you call it mine?" she said, "I don't think I want to have my own way—except in some things. I am very willing to do what you tell me, papa; but it will not be my will—it will be your will. Why then shouldn't you do it yourself, and have the pleasure of it, and not leave it to me?"

"The pleasure of it!" he said. And then paused and cleared his voice, and drew his chair nearer to hers. "Look here, Lucy," he said, "you have heard something about your mother—not very much; but still you have heard something. She was a good woman, a very good woman. She was not of my kind. In the way of money, she let me manage—she never interfered. But still she was not of my kind. She

was a woman that had little but trouble in this world, Lucy. She was what people call an old maid when we married. We were both old maids for that matter," he added, with his usual chuckle, " and she had always had a hard life. She was the old maid of the family ; when anything was wrong, she was the one that was sent for. She was the one that nursed them all when they were ill. Father and mother—she closed both their eyes. She never had time to think what was going to become of her. When she came back to Farafield to live with poor Robert, nobody knew he was rich. It was the old story over again. She thought she was coming only to nurse him, and slave for him till he died. Your mother was a good woman—a very good woman, Lucy—"

His voice was a little thick, and the tears sprang into Lucy's eyes.

" Oh ! thank you, papa ; thank you for telling me," she said.

" That she was," he went on after a little pause, " the best of women. And after we were

married she had just as hard a life as ever. She was never well ; and all your little brothers and sisters came—and went again. That's very hard upon a woman, Lucy. A baby—who cares much about a baby? it does not seem anything to make a fuss about. There's too many of them in the world ; but to have them, and to lose them, is terrible work for a woman. We didn't know about the money at first ; and what's money when things are going to the bad in that way? She never got what you may call the good of it. She was one of your giving people. Her hand was never out of her pocket as long as she had a penny in it ; but she never rightly got the good of the money. In the first place, we didn't know about it ; and in the second place, why, you know there was me."

" You?" Lucy looked at him with a question in her eyes.

" Yes," said old Trevor with a comical look of half real, half simulated penitence. " I wanted to tell you all this some time, to show

you your duty—there was me, Lucy. I told you I was fond of money; and more still, when I wasn't used to it. I clutched it all, and wanted more; and she left it all to me, poor dear. She never even knew how much it was—she let me do whatever I pleased. I didn't even always let her have what she wanted for her poor folks, Lucy," he added ruefully, shaking his head; but there was something about the corner of his mouth which was not repentance. "I was a beast to her—that's just what I was; but, poor thing, she never knew— She thought to the last we couldn't afford any more. She left all the money matters to me."

"She ought to have had her money for the poor, papa."

"Yes, indeed; don't I say so?" a half chuckle of triumph in his own successful craftiness, mingled with the subdued tone appropriate to this confession. "And since she's been dead," he added with a touch of complacency, "I've behaved badly by poor Lucilla. I acknowledge that I have behaved badly; and that is just

why I am determined she shall have her revenge—”

“Her revenge!” Lucy looked at him aghast.

“Yes, her revenge; you, Lucy, a girl that shall be brought up a lady, that shall have everything of the best; that shall do as she pleases, and give with both hands. Ah, Lucilla, poor thing, would have liked that; she would have ruined me with giving,” he cried with a momentary tone of complaint, “but you, Lucy, you won’t be able to ruin yourself. You will always have plenty, you will be able to cut and come again as people say; isn’t that what I have bred you up for since you were a baby? No, no, it isn’t I that could do it (and I wouldn’t if I could) nor Jock that shall have a penny. It is you that shall be the greatest heiress in England, and do the most for the poor, as Lucilla would have done. Please God she shall have her revenge.”

These strange words, which, though they were mixed with so quaint an admixture of comic self-

consciousness, had yet passion in them, and an odd kind of idealism and romance, passed over the placid head of Lucy without exciting any feeling but surprise. She was very much astonished. It was impossible to her to understand the vehemence of feeling, generous in its way, though chequered with so much that was not generous, in her father's tone, and she was totally at a loss how to reply. They were alone, and when they were alone the conversation almost always turned on the will, which was not an enlivening subject to Lucy. Certainly the diversion she had made of their mutual thoughts from their ordinary channel had been more amusing ; but it had been perplexing too. A little tea-table was set out in the middle of the room, the "massive" silver tea-service which had been one of the few gratifications got by Lucy's mother out of her fortune, shining upon it, in full display for the benefit of Mrs. Stone, who was expected. Mr. Trevor was in a garrulous mood ; he had prepared himself to talk while he waited for his visitor, and Lucy's questions

had been all that were wanted to loosen the flood-gates. While she sat opposite to him, wondering, pondering, occasionally looking up at him over her knitting, taking into her mind as best she could the information she had got, but not knowing what to say, he proceeded as if unable to stop himself, with a little gesture of excitement, his hand sawing the air.

“No, she never had much comfort in her life —hard work, sick-nursing and trouble, one dying after another, poor Lucilla; but all *she* didn’t have, her girl shall have. She was a governess one while. Always be kind to governesses, Lucy, wherever you see them. Your mother was a real good woman. She would have honoured any station; she had the most unbounded confidence in me, she never asked a word of explanation.”

“Papa,” said Lucy, glad, in the disturbance of her mind, for any interruption, “I think I hear Mrs. Stone.”

“Then go down and meet her,” said old Trevor, but he went on with his recapitulation of his

wife's virtues. "Never asked a question, was always satisfied whatever I said to her—"

Lucy heard his voice as she went downstairs. She was still wondering, not knowing what to make of it, but self-possessed in that calm of youth which nothing disturbs. It was odd that her father should speak so. He had never been so confidential, or talked of himself so much before; altogether it was strange, tempting her half to laugh, half to cry; but that was all. She went down quite composedly to meet Mrs. Stone, who was untying her white Shetland shawl from her head in the hall. Lucy saw that Mrs. Ford was peeping from the parlour door at the visitor, with something like a scowl upon her face. Mrs. Ford distrusted and feared the schoolmistress; she thought her capable of marrying old Trevor, notwithstanding his years, and of dissipating Lucy's fortune, and perhaps raising up rivals to little Jock in his sister's affections; for Lucy's affections were all he had to look to, Mrs. Ford was aware, and she thought it was a wicked shame.

“I hope you are better than when I saw you last,” Mrs. Stone said, casting a quick glance around her. She knew everything very well by sight in Mr. Trevor’s not very comfortable room, the white silky mats, the blue curtains, the little table groaning under that tea-service, which was easy to see weighed as many ounces as a tea-service could be made to weigh. How much more comfortable, she could not but think, the rich old man might have been made; but then he did not know any better, and Lucy did not know any better; they were used to it; they liked this as well as the best. What a blessing for Lucy that as long as she was young enough to be trained she had fallen into good hands! Mrs. Stone took the big easy chair which Lucy rolled forward to the other side of the fire, and sat down after that greeting. She saw more clearly than Lucy did the excitement in old Mr. Trevor’s eyes. What was it? An additional glass of wine after dinner, Mrs. Stone thought, a very small matter would be enough to upset an old man sedentary and crippled as old Trevor was.

“Never was better in my life,” he said; “that is I am getting old, and my legs are not good for much, as you know, ma’am; but thank God I have plenty to keep my mind occupied and interested, and that is the great thing, that is the great thing—at my age.”

“Always thinking about Lucy,” Mrs. Stone said.

“Yes, always about Lucy. She is worth it, ma’am: a girl with her prospects is something worth thinking about. She has all the world before her, she has the ball at her foot.”

“Ah, Mr. Trevor, that is what we always think when we are young; everything that is good is going to happen to us, and nothing that is evil. We think we can choose for ourselves, and make our lives for ourselves.”

“And so she shall,” said old Trevor, “ay, that she shall. I beg your pardon, ma’am, but when I speak of Lucy it isn’t merely as a little bit of a girl with her life before her. I think of the place she is to take, and the power she will have in her hands.”

“ You mean her fortune, Mr. Trevor. Dear child, give me a cup of tea. You think it is not a bad thing to talk so much to her about her fortune ?”

“ No, ma’am,” said the old man, “ on the contrary, the very best thing possible. It would be too great a weight for anyone not used to it. You know it fills my mind night and day. I’ve got to prepare her for it, and put all straight for her as far as I can. There is many a great person that has not the weight on her shoulders that little thing will have, and that is why I sent for you.”

“ Asked me to come and take tea,” said Mrs. Stone, smiling. “ No sugar, my dear. Yes, no doubt we have to train her for her future responsibilities. I do it by trying to make her a good girl, Mr. Trevor, and I think I have succeeded,” the lady added, putting her hand affectionately on the girl’s shoulder. Lucy, standing between the two, with the cup of tea in one hand and a plateful of cake in the other, looked as completely unexcited by all this talk

about her, and as unlike a personage of vast importance, as personages of importance often contrive to do.

“She is a good girl by nature,” said her father, somewhat sharply. “I want to tell, Ma’am, of a trust I have appointed you to in my will—along with others,” he added hastily. “along with others. I have arranged that in case of Lucy’s marriage——”

“Had not you better step downstairs a little, my dear, and just see whether Jane is waiting in the hall?” Mrs. Stone said hurriedly. “Perhaps Mrs. Ford would allow her, as it is so cold, to go downstairs.”

“You need not send her away,” said old Trevor, grimly, “she knows all about it. I don’t want her to be taken by surprise when I die. I want her to know all that is in store for her.”

“But about her marriage, my dear Mr. Trevor; at seventeen these ideas come too quickly of themselves.”

“I tell you, Ma’am, Lucy is not like common

girls," he said testily ; " when a woman's in a great position, she has to learn many things that otherwise might be kept from her. What had the Queen to do, I would like to know ? Settle all her marriage herself, whatever anyone might think."

" Poor young lady ! I used to hear my mother say that her heart bled for her. But you don't compare our Lucy with Her Majesty, Mr. Trevor ? Dear Lucy ! though she were the richest girl in England, it would still be a little different from the Queen."

" Madam," said old Trevor, solemnly, " so far as I am aware she *will* be the richest girl in England, and therefore surrounded by dangers ; so I've devised a scheme for her safety, and I have put you on the committee. If you will wait a moment till I have got my spectacles I will read it all out to you here."

Mrs. Stone was the third person to whom that wonderful paragraph had been read. She listened with surprise, gradually rising into consternation. When she saw, with the corner of her

eye, Lucy coming softly from behind the shelter of the screen, she made an imperative gesture, without looking round, to send her away. The girl obeyed with a smile. Why should she be sent away? she had already heard it all.

She went outside and sat down upon the stair to wait. The draught that swept up the well of the staircase did not affect Lucy; her blood, though it flowed so tranquilly through her veins, was young and kept her warm. She had given up easily the attempt she had made to influence her father, and now she half laughed to herself at the fuss they all made about herself. What were they making such a fuss about? The importance her father attached to all her future proceedings, was to Lucy just about as sensible as Mrs. Stone's precautions for preventing her hearing something she knew perfectly; but she could afford to smile at both.

What did it matter? Lucy felt that every-

thing would go on all the same, that to-day would be as yesterday, and life quite a simple, easy business, whatever they might say.

CHAPTER IX.

A GREAT TEMPTATION.

THE important communication made to her by Mr. Trevor made a great impression upon the mind of Mrs. Stone, but it was an impression of a confusing kind, disturbing all her previous plans and thoughts. It had been her intention, ever since Lucy was placed in her care, to take a decided part in the shaping of the girl's life. Her imagination had been roused by the situation altogether—a young creature, simple, pliable, and unformed, with no relations who had any real right to guide her, and with a great fortune—what might not be made of such a charge! It was not

with any covetous inclination to employ her pupil's wealth to her own advantage that Mrs. Stone had determined by every means in her power to acquire an influence over Lucy. She was much too high-minded, too proud, for anything of the sort. No doubt there was an alloy, if not of selfishness, at least of self-regard, in her higher motive, but the worst she would have done would have been to carry out some pet projects of her own by Lucy's help, not to enrich herself. She thought (perhaps), or rather without thinking was aware, that her own importance would be increased by her influence over the heiress; but nothing in the shape of personal aggrandizement was present to her thoughts, even by inference. Mr. Trevor's communication however disturbed her mind in the most uncomfortable way. When you are contemplating a vague influence of a general kind, to be gradually and with trouble acquired, it is demoralizing to have a definite power suddenly thrust into your hands; and it is hardly possible to refrain from exercising that

power, were it but for the sake of the novelty and unexpected character of it, *en attendant* the larger influence to be acquired hereafter. As Mrs. Stone sat in front of Mr. Trevor's fire listening to him, with a ringing in her ears of sudden excitement, holding her cup of tea in her hand, with external calm, yet feeling every pulse flutter, there suddenly appeared before her bewildered eyes, not written on the wall like Belshazzar's warning, but hanging in the air without any material support, like an illuminated scroll, in big luminous letters, the name which her sister had suggested: the name of Frank—F R A N K—but bigger, a great deal bigger, than any capitals, dazzling her eyes with the glow in them. Her first feeling was alarm and a kind of horror. It was all she could do to restrain the outcry that rose to her lips. She started so that she spilled her tea, which was hot, so that she started still more; but upon this little accident she put the best face possible.

“It is nothing, my love, nothing,” she said, when Lucy hastened to her rescue; “only a

little awkwardness on my part, and my old black silk won't hurt." She looked up with a smile in Lucy's face, when lo! the appearance sailed into the air over Lucy's head, and hung there magically, almost touching the girl's fair hair. "How awkward I am," Mrs. Stone cried, looking quite pale and spilling more tea. She thought it was something diabolical, a piece of witchcraft; but it cannot be supposed that it was an easy matter to drive it out of her thoughts. She scarcely knew what happened afterwards, till she had bidden the Trevors good night and found herself in the muddy bit of road which led to the White House, and got rid, in the darkness, of that startling legend. Was it diabolical, or was it a suggestion from heaven? Perhaps it would have been more near the mark if she had remembered that it was a suggestion from Miss Southwood, which she had crushed with infinite scorn when it was made; but Mrs. Stone did not, or would not, remember this. The night was damp and foggy, and the lights of her own house appeared to her

all blurred and hazy, with prismatic haloes round them, like so many sickly moons, and the intermediate bit of road was fitfully lighted by the lantern carried by her maid, which shone in the dark puddles and glistening wet herbage. But Mrs. Stone was scarcely conscious where she was, as she picked her way lightly from one bit of solid path to another; her mind was so full that she might have been in Regent Street, or on a Swiss mountain. Frank! was it a diabolical suggestion, or a revelation from heaven?

All was quiet in the White House when its mistress got in. It was ten o'clock, and the doves were in their nests, which, to be sure, is but an ornamental way of saying that all the girls had gone to bed. The light burned low in the hall, as it burned all night, for Miss Southwood thought light was "a protection" to a lonely house; and the open door of the drawing-room, in which it was the custom of the ladies to sit with their pupils after tea, showing something of the disorderly look of a room deserted

for the night, notwithstanding the tidiness with which all the little work-baskets were put out of the way. Beside that open door, however, was another still shining with firelight and lamp-light, where a little supper-tray had just been placed on the table, and a pretty silver cover and crystal decanter, not to speak of a delicate fragrance of cooking, showed that the mistress of the house was pleasantly provided for. No mystery was made of this little supper, which everybody knew was Mrs. Stone's favourite meal; but all the girls had a curiosity about it, and the governesses felt themselves injured that they were not privileged to share its delights. Mrs. Stone, however, stoutly defended her privacy at this hour of repose. She sat down with a sigh of relief, opposite to her sister, who presided at the little white-covered table.

“ You are tired,” said Miss Southwood, sympathetically, “ and that girl has forgotten as usual to put the claret to the fire. But this bird is very well cooked, and the bread-crumbs

are brown and crisp, just as you like them. Why was it he sent for you? something quite trifling, I suppose. I wonder how parents can reconcile themselves to the trouble they give."

"It was not a trifle, it was about Lucy's marriage," said the other, "or rather about preventing Lucy's marriage, I think. I am to have a finger in the pie."

"*You!* Old Mr. Trevor is very queer, I know; is he going to take up that odious French system, and arrange it without any reference to the girl? But surely, Maria, you would never countenance an iniquity like that?"

"Iniquity! are you sure it is an iniquity? In some points of view I approve of it greatly. Do you think I could not choose better husbands for the girls than they will ever choose for themselves? How is a girl to exercise any judgment in the matter? She takes the first man that comes, perhaps, or the first fool she thinks nice-looking, and what is there sacred in that?"

"I thought you were always the one to stand up for love," said Miss Southwood. "I never pretend to know anything about it myself."

"Oh, when there is *love*," said Mrs. Stone, "that is another thing. But what do they know about love? It is fancy, it is not love; how should they know?"

"I am sure *I* can't tell," answered the unmarried sister, very demurely, "don't ask me to give any opinion; you are the one that ought to know; and I have always heard you say, and understood you to uphold——"

"Yes, yes, yes!" cried the other, impatiently; "when a thing has been said once, one is held to it for ever, in this unintelligent way. You never consider how unlike one case is to another, or take the circumstances into account. Besides, all I said referred to a sentiment already formed. I would never tear two young people asunder that were fond of each other, because one was rich and the other poor; that is a thing I could never be guilty of. But this is a

very different matter. To take care that a girl like Lucy Trevor does not make a foolish choice, or even," said Mrs. Stone, with a certain solemnity and deliberateness of utterance, "to direct her thoughts to some one eminently suitable—"

Miss Southwood looked at her with eager eyes. After the manner in which her suggestion had been received at their former interview, she did not venture to repeat it; but she knew by experience that a suggestion is sometimes very badly received to-day, and accepted as a matter of course, or even energetically acted upon, to-morrow; so she said nothing, but with eager, though concealed, scrutiny, watched her sister's looks. Finding, however, that Mrs. Stone said nothing more, but pensively eat her chicken, she resumed after a while her inquiries.

"I suppose Mr. Trevor has been consulting you," she said, "and I am sure it was the very best thing he could do. But, after all, Lucy is only seventeen, poor little thing! and a good

girl, with no nonsense about her. Does he want to marry her off so young, the poor child?"

"I think," said Mrs. Stone, reflectively, turning her chair to the fire, "he does not want her to marry at all."

"Oh!" cried Miss Southwood in dismay. She had not married herself: she professed at once, when the subject was mentioned, her entire incompetence to give any opinion; but the idea that a girl's friends should wish her *not* to marry filled her mind with an amazement beyond words. The *naïveté* of her conviction on this point betrayed itself in her unfeigned wonder. She could not believe it. "I suppose," she said, "that he wants to keep the money in the family; and that means that he will marry her to her cousin, that young man, that Mr. Rainy."

"Her cousin! you mean the certificated schoolmaster, the Dissenter."

"Oh, he is not a Dissenter; we met him at

the Rectory ; he is a very rising young man, and clever, and——”

“ You may save yourself the trouble of enumerating his good qualities. I can’t tell how you know them ; but Lucy shall never marry the schoolmaster, I will refuse my consent.”

“ You will refuse your consent ? and what will that matter ?” Miss Southwood said.

Mrs. Stone made no particular answer. She put her feet upon the comfortable velvet cushion before the fire, and smiled. She did not care to enter upon explanations, but she had made up her mind. The fire was bright, the bird had been good, and her modest glass of claret was excellent. She was altogether in a balmy humour, willing to enjoy the many comforts of her life, and to feel benevolently towards her neighbour.

“ I think you are right,” she said, “ and perhaps I am prejudiced. He is a rising young man. We have met him two or three times at the Rectory, so he cannot be a Dissenter ; but

he is not a gentleman either. How should he be, being one of those Rainys? I shouldn't wonder if it was to keep him out."

"If what was to keep him out?"

"By the way," said Mrs. Stone, "I have a letter to write. Don't let me keep you out of bed, Ellen. I am very much behind in family correspondence. Have any of the St. Clairs ever been at the White House since we came here? I can't recollect."

"Not one," said Miss Southwood, with a beating heart. "Not one! and I have often thought, Maria, considering all things, and that they have no father, poor things, and are not very well off—and so nice, both sisters and brothers——"

"One does not want so many arguments. Frank may come and pay us a visit if he likes," said Mrs. Stone with much amiability. But it was not till the morning, when she came down first, as she always did, and put the letter, which had been left on Mrs. Stone's private writing-table, ready for the early post, in the

letter-bag, that Miss Southwood had the satisfaction of seeing that it was addressed to the favourite nephew, whose name she had not ventured to pronounce for a second time. Mrs. Stone had not been inattentive to the vision, the intimation, whether from heaven or the other place. He was to come and try his fortune in those lists.

Miss Southwood went about her occupations all day as if she trod on air; but she kept her lips tightly shut, and never asked a question. She was discretion itself. As for Mrs. Stone, after she had done it, many doubts suggested themselves. It was not for nothing, not by mere vice of temperament that she obeyed her own impulses so readily. Like all impulsive people, she was subject to cold fits as well as hot; but like many other impulsive people, she had learned that it was her best policy to obey the first imperious movement of nature. The thing was done, at all events, before the struggle of judgment began. And the answer she made

to her own objections was a mysterious one. "Why not I, as well as Lady Randolph," was what she said to herself.

CHAPTER X.

CHATTER.

“ Do you know,” said Katie Russell, “ there is a gentleman in the house ? None of us have seen him ; but he came yesterday. He is young, and tall, and nice-looking. He is their nephew. Mademoiselle says it is quite improper. Of course, she oughtn’t to say so ; and the girls don’t know what to think : for you know it is queer.”

“ Why is it queer ?” said Lucy. “ If he is their nephew, he may surely come to see them. If they had a son, he would live here.”

“ I don’t think so,” said Katie promptly. “ Oh no ! if they had a dozen sons, not while

the girls are here. It would never do. I have been at other schools, and I know. I have spent my life at schools, I think," the girl said with an impatient shrug of her shoulders, " and I know Mademoiselle is quite right, though she oughtn't to say so. I wonder, Lucy, if I will be as governessy when I am old? They almost always are."

Lucy could not follow this quick digression. She gazed at her friend with wondering eyes. " You always jump so," she said. " Which am I to answer—about the gentleman, or about—"

" Oh! never mind the gentleman. I only told you—it can't matter very much to me," said Katie. " It is for Maud and Lily, and girls of that set that it is not right, or you— Is it true that you are to have a great fortune, Lucy? I always wanted to ask you—but I did not like—"

" Yes, I believe so," said Lucy quietly, " why shouldn't you like? Papa takes a great deal of trouble about it; but it does not matter so much to me. One is just the same one's self, whether

one is rich or poor; it will give a great deal of trouble. So I don't care for it for my part."

"Oh! I should care for it," cried Katie. "I should not mind the trouble. How delightful it must be to be really, really rich! I should give—I should do—oh I don't know what I shouldn't do! The use of being rich," Katie added sententiously, "is that you can do as you please—go where you please, be as kind to everybody as you please; help people, enjoy yourself, buy everything you like, and yet always have something. Oh!" she said, clasping her hands, "to have to think and think whether you can buy yourself a pair of gloves—not to be able to get a cab when your mother is tired; and to grow old, and to grow governessy like Mademoiselle—"

"Mademoiselle is very nice, Katie. Don't say anything against her."

"I say anything against her! I adore her! but she is governessy, how can she help it, poor old darling? Her mind is full of the girls' little

ways, and what they mean by this and by that, Lucy," said the girl stopping short to give greater emphasis to her words. "If we ever see each other when I am an old governess like Mademoiselle—be sure you remember to tell me when you see me worrying, that the girls mean *nothing* by it—*nothing!*!" This is the 21st of February. It is my birthday—I am nineteen. Tell me to recollect that I said they meant nothing—and that it's true."

"Are you really nineteen to-day?" said Lucy.
"Older than I—"

"More than a year older. I wonder," said Katie with that patronage and superiority which the poor often show to the rich, "whether, when you are fifty, you will know as much of the world as I do now?"

Lucy's companion was the governess-pupil, the one among the band of girls whose society her father had counselled her not to seek. Perhaps there was something of the perversity of youth in the preference which, notwithstanding this advice, Lucy felt for the girl whose friendship old Mr. Trevor

had decided could be of no use whatever to her. Lucy was not nearly so clever as Katie Russell, who was already a great help in the school, and earning the lessons which she shared with the more advanced pupils. But Lucy was by no means so sure of her inferiority in point of experience as her companion was. She knew, if not the expedients of poverty, yet of economy through Mrs. Ford's example, and she knew many details of a lower level of existence, lower than anything Katie was acquainted with ; and even the shadow of her own future power which had lain upon her from her childhood had stood in the stead of knowledge to Lucy, teaching her many things ; but she was a quiet person, thinking much more than she spoke ; and she made no reply to this imputation of ignorance, though she thought it a mistake. She replied with a little closer pressure of her friend's arm. “ Why are you so sure of being an old governess ? You will marry—most likely the first of all of us.”

“ Oh ! no, no, don't you know there are a

million more women in England than men? It is in all the papers. Some of us will marry, you, for instance; but there must be a proportion—say five out of twenty, that's not much,” said Katie, knitting her soft brows, “ who never will; and I shall be one of them. For fun,” she said, throwing gravity to the winds, “ let us guess who the other four will be.”

“ Me,” said Lucy with a gentle composure and indifference alike to matrimony and to grammar. “ I think that is what papa would like best—”

“ That is absurd,” said Katie, “ you! you will have a hundred proposals before you are out a year. You will be the very first.”

“ Put me down, however,” Lucy repeated. “ It will be rather a good thing to be kept from getting married, if it is as you say. It will help to set the balance straight. There will be my gentleman for one of you.”

“ You do not mean that you are to be *kept* from marrying,” Katie cried aghast. This made a still greater impression on her mind than it had done on Miss Southwood’s, and it suggested

to her a sudden chivalrous idea of rescue. Katie too had a Frank, a cousin, between whom and herself there had existed from the earliest times a baby tenderness. If ever she was married, Katie had tacitly concluded that he would be "the gentleman." They might set up a school together; they might work together in various ways. It was a vague probability, yet one in which most of the light of Katie's future lay. But suddenly it flashed upon her, all in a moment, what a chance, what an opening was this for any man. Frank was poor; they were all poor; but if he could be persuaded to step in and save Lucy from the celibacy to which she seemed to think herself condemned, Frank's fortune would be made. It was the basest calculation in the world; and yet nothing could have been more innocent—nay generous. It blanched Katie's cheeks for the moment; but filled her mind with a whirl of thoughts. What a thing it would be for him and all the family! If the dream should come to pass, Katie felt that she herself might give in at once, and make

up her mind to grow old and governessy like Mademoiselle ; but what did that matter, she asked herself heroically. For a second, indeed, she paused to think whether her brother, Bertie, might not answer the purpose without costing herself so much ; but anticipated sacrifice is the purest delight of misery at nineteen, and she rather preferred to think that this great advantage to her cousin and her friend would be purchased at the cost of her happiness. And Frank himself might not like the idea at first ; her great consolation was that it was almost certain Frank would not like it. But he must learn to subdue his inclinations, she thought proudly —would not she do so for his sake ? If *other people* were content to make that sacrifice, why should not he ? And what a difference it would make, if a stream of comfort—of money and all that money can buy, ease of mind and freedom from debt, and power to do what one would—came suddenly pouring in to the family, setting everything right that was wrong, and smoothing away all difficulties ! To despise money is a

fine thing ; but how few can do it ! Katie did not despise it all. She forgot her companion while she walked on dreamily by her side, thinking of her fortune. Mercenary little wretch the moralist would say ; and yet she was not mercenary at all.

The girls were walking across the Common by themselves. It was part of Mrs. Stone's enlightened system that she allowed them to do so, in cases where the parents did not interfere. And so far as these two were concerned, even the consent of the parents was unnecessary ; for was not Katie Russell, though only eighteen, a governess in the bud ? and, accordingly, quite capable of acting as chaperon when necessary. Poor little Katie ! this was one of the mild indignities of her lot that she felt most. Her lot was not at all a bad one at Mrs. Stone's, where the head of the establishment backed her up quietly as indeed the one of her inmates with whom she was most in sympathy—and when the girls were " nice." Girls are not all " nice," any more than are any other class of the community,

and Katie had known what it was to be snubbed and scorned, and even insulted. But happily this was not the fashion at the White House. Still one mark of her inferior position remained in the fact that Katie, though so young, and one of the prettiest of the band, was, being half a governess, qualified to accompany her peers in the character of chaperon. It was not quite clear that she might not be at that moment taking care of Lucy, who was less than a year her junior ; but happily this idea had not crossed her mind. It was Sunday, which was a day of great freedom at the White House—a day given over (after due attention to all religious duties, need it be said? for Mrs. Stone knew what was expected of her, and you may be sure took all her doves to church with the most undeviating regularity) to confidences, to talks, to letter-writings. Some of the girls were covering sheets of note-paper with the most intimate revelations, some were chattering in corners, some reading story-books. Story-books are not necessarily novels—Mrs. Stone made a clever distinction.

There was nothing in three volumes upon her purified and dignified shelves ; but a book in one volume had a very good chance of coming within her tolerant reading of the word Story. And some were out, perambulating about the garden, where the first crocuses were beginning to bloom, or crossing the Common by those devious little paths half hidden in heather and all kinds of wild plants which were bad for boots and dresses—but very pleasant otherwise. It was along one of these that Lucy Trevor and her companion were wandering. The mossy turf was very green, betraying the moisture beneath ; and the great bushes of heather, with all the withered bloom stiffened upon them, stood up like mimic forests from the treacherous grass. Wild bushes of gorse, with here and there a solitary speck of yellow, a premature bud upon them interspersed their larger growth here and there. The frost had all melted away. In the little marshy pools, the water was clear and caught glimpses of a sky faintly blue. One willow on the very verge of the Common had hung

out its tassels, those prophecies of coming life.

There was a scent of Spring in the air. "In the Spring a young man's fancy lightly turns to—" love, the poet says; and so, perhaps, does a girl's. But before either are warmly awakened to that interest, Spring touches them thrilling with a profusion of thought and planning and anticipation, not so distinct as love.. The young creatures feel the sap of life mounting within them. Oft-times they know nothing more, and have formed no definite idea either of what they want, or why; but their minds are running over with a flood of living. Their plans go lightly skimming through the air, now poising a moment on a branch, and again flashing widely on devious wing to all the points of the compass like so many birds. There was no immediate change necessary in the placid course of their school-girl existence; but they leapt forward to meet the future with all the force of their energies. Yet, perhaps, it was only one of them who did this. Lucy was too calm in the certainty of the changes that sooner or later would happen to her—changes

already mapped out and arranged for her, as she was well aware—to be able to give herself up to these indefinite pleasures of imagination. But Katie leaped at her future with the fervour of a fresh imagination. She made up her mind to sacrifice herself, and give Lucy her cousin in less time than many would take to decide whether they should give up a ribbon. She sank into silence for a little time while she was pondering it, but never from any indecision; only because in her rapid foresight of all that was necessary, she did not quite see how the first step—the introduction of these two to each other was to be brought about.

Just then the girls became aware of two other figures, bearing down upon them from the other side of the Common—two larger personages making their slight youth look what it was, something not much more than childish. There was Mrs. Stone and the unknown gentleman who had arrived at the White House, to the scandal of the old governess, last night. When the girls perceived this, they mutually gave each other's

arms a warning pressure. "Oh, look, here he is!" said Katie, and, "Is that the gentleman?" Lucy said. The encounter brought to the former a quick flush of excitement. She wondered a little, on her own account, who the gentleman was; for an apparition of such an unusual description in a girl's school had naturally excited all the inmates. A man under Mrs. Stone's roof! Men were common enough things at home, and aroused no feelings of curiosity or alarm. But here it was quite different. Whence came he, and what had he come for? But besides this, there was another source of interest in Katie's thoughts. As she conceived her own plot, a glimmering sense of the other came upon her by instinct. Why had this wonderful occurrence, this arrival of a gentleman, happened at Mrs. Stone's? Mrs. Stone knew all about Lucy's fortune, and the wicked scheme invented by her father (of which Katie knew nothing except by lively guesses) to keep her unmarried. And straightway the gentleman had come! She watched him anxiously as he approached. He was like

Mrs. Stone, and he was not unlike the smiling and gracious face in a hairdresser's window, complacent in waxwork satisfaction. He was large, tall, with fine black hair, whiskers and moustache, and a good complexion. He had something of that air of self-display—not vanity or conceit, but simply expansion and spreading out of himself which is characteristic of large men used to the company of many women. Katie pressed her friend's arm more and more closely as they approached.

“What do you think of him?” she said. “I wonder if they will speak to us. Will Mrs. Stone introduce us? If she does, I know what I shall think.”

“What shall you think?” said Lucy, across whose mind no glimmering of the cause of this unusual visit had flown. She watched him coming very placidly. “Mrs. Stone will not stop. She never does when she has any stranger with her. Who is it, Katie? I never heard that they had any brother.”

“It is their nephew,” Katie said, with some-

thing of that knowledge which is what she herself called governessy, that minute acquaintance with all details of a family which people in any kind of dependence are so apt to attain. Mademoiselle was her authority, Mademoiselle, who, though she was "nice," had yet the foibles of her position, and a certain jealous interest, not altogether unkind, yet too curious to be entirely benevolent, about all her employer's works and ways. "He was brought up for the Church, but he has not gone into the Church. Doesn't he look like a parson? When a man has been brought up in that way, he never gets the better of it. He always looks like a spoilt clergyman."

"I don't think he looks like a clergyman at all," said Lucy, "nor spoilt either."

"Oh, you admire him! I ought to have known you are just the kind of girl to like a barber's block man. Our Frank," said Katie, with some vehemence, "is not so big—he has not half such a shirt-front; but I am sure he has more strength. You should see him throwing things.

He won two cups for that—and one for running," she added with a sigh. She already felt something of the pang with which these cherished cups would be put, with their owner, into another's possession. In imagination, she had sometimes seen them arranged on a humble side-board in a little house, with which she herself, Katie, had the closest connection. But that was the merest dream, and not to be considered for a moment when the interest of the one and the happiness of the other were concerned.

"Frank! who is Frank?" said Lucy, "you never told me of him before."

"Oh! Frank is my cousin. There never was any occasion," said Katie, with a slightly querulous tone, which Lucy did not understand. She looked with a little wonder at her friend, then set down her perturbation to the score of Mrs. Stone, who was now very near. The girls withdrew from each other to make room, leaving the narrow path clear between. Mrs. Stone answered this courtesy by stepping forward in front

of the gentleman with a gracious smile upon her face.

“Where are you going?” she said. “I think, my dear children, it is going to rain. You must soon turn back; and the Common is very wet. After you have got back and changed your boots come to my room to tea.” And then she passed on with little amical nods and smiles. The gentleman was not introduced to them, but he took off his hat as he followed behind Mrs. Stone, a courtesy which is always agreeable to girls who have only lately ceased to be little girls, and come within the range of dignified salutations. Even Lucy’s tranquil soul owned a faint flutter of pleasure. It was a distinct honour too to be asked to Mrs. Stone’s room to tea, and to know that they were to be introduced into the society of the “gentleman” added a little additional excitement. They walked only a very little way further, mindful at once of the advice and the invitation.

“I wonder if any of the others will be there,” said Katie. She was somewhat elated although

she was suspicious, and in a state of half resistance to Mrs. Stone and the rival Frank, whose rivalry the little schemer felt by instinct. As for Lucy, the object of all this plotting, she suspected nothing. She even felt a little guilty in the pleasure to which she looked forward. To be asked to Mrs. Stone's room to tea on Sunday evening was a distinction of which all the girls were proud. It was like an invitation from the Queen, a command which was not to be disregarded; but yet she had a little uneasiness in her mind, thinking of her little brother, who would be disappointed. Even for Mrs. Stone, the sovereign of this small world, she did not like to break faith with little Jock.

CHAPTER XI.

AN AFTERNOON TEA.

MRS. STONE'S room was fitted up in the latest, which I need not say is far from being the newest fashion. It would indeed have been an insult to her to say that anything in it was new. Mr. Morris had only just begun to reign over the homes of the æsthetic classes; but Mrs. Stone was well in advance of her age, and her walls were covered with a very large pattern of acanthus leaves in several shades of green, with curtains as nearly as possible the same in design and colour. She had a number of plates hung about the walls instead of pictures, and here and there gleaming shelves and little

cabinets full of china, which were a great relief and comfort to the eye. Her chairs were Chippendale, need it be said? and held her visitors upright in a dignified height and security. The room had but one window, which was large, but half filled with designs in glass, and half overshadowed by a great lime-tree, which was delightful in summer, but in February not so delightful. The fire was at the end of the room, and the room was somewhat dark, especially in the afternoon. When the two girls went in, several persons were dimly visible seated in those large and solemn Chippendalian chairs, with hands reposing upon the arms of them, ranged against the walls like Egyptian gods. The colour of one of these figures, though faint in the gloom, was that of Miss Southwood's grey velveteen, her ordinary afternoon dress, and therefore recognisable; but the others in masculine black clothes, with only a vague whiteness for their faces, were mysterious as Isis and Osiris; and so was a lady with her veil over her face, who sat at the other side of the fire-place,

with the air of a chairwoman at a meeting, high and stately—though she caught a little of the pale afternoon daylight upon her, yet her dark dress and sealskin coat and veil prevented any distinctness of revelation. In this correct and carefully arranged parlour there was one weak point. A woman who is without caprice is unworthy of being called a woman. Instead of herself occupying a Chippendale chair, and having her tea-tray placed upon the tall, slender-limbed Queen Anne table, which stood in readiness against the wall, Mrs. Stone chose to make herself the one anachronism in the place. Her chair was a low one in front of the fire; her tea-table was in proportion—a bit of debased nineteenth century comfort in the midst of the stately grace which she professed to think so much more delightful. Why was this? It was Mrs. Stone's pleasure, and there was no more to be said. She, with her pretty white cap upon her handsome head, seated at the feet of all her silent guests in their high chairs, was not only the central light in the picture, but a kind of

humorous commentary upon it; but whether this proceeded from any sense of the joke in her, or was merely the expression of her own determination to please herself, were it even in flat rebellion to her own code, no one could tell.

“You are just in time,” she said, “Lucy and Katie, to give our friends some tea. Don’t interfere, Frank. I like girls to hand tea. It comes within their province; and it is a pretty office, which they do far more prettily than you can.”

“That I don’t dispute for a moment,” said a large round manly baritone, enthroned on high in one of the Chippendale chairs, “and I don’t deny that I like to be served by such hands when it is permitted.”

“That is one of the popular fallacies about women,” said Mrs. Stone, “and involves the whole question. Our weak surrender of our rights for the pleasure of being waited upon in public, was I suppose one of the consequences of chivalry. According to my theory, it is the business of women to serve. You shoot the

birds or kill the deer, Mr. Rushton, as you best can, and we cook it and carve it, and serve it up to you."

"If this beatitude depends upon my ability to kill the deer or shoot the birds, my dear lady!" said another good-natured voice: which added immediately, "Why, this is Lucy Trevor! I am very glad to see you. My dear, this is Lucy Trevor. Since she has been at the White House we have scarcely seen her. You girls are made too happy when you get under the charge of Mrs. Stone."

"Is it you, Lucy?" said the lady with the veil; "come and speak to me, dear. I think it is a year since I have seen you. You have grown up, quite grown up in the time. How these young creatures change! A year does not make much difference in us—but this child has shot up! And Raymond—you remember your playfellow, Lucy—why, he is a man, as old as his father, giving us advice, if you please! It is something wonderful. I catch myself laughing out when I hear him discoursing about law.

Raymond giving his opinion, my little boy, my baby! And I daresay little Lucy has begun to give her opinion too."

"Lucy is a very good girl," said Mrs. Stone, "she never takes anything upon her. Katie now and then favours us with her ideas as to how the world should be governed."

"That is right," said Mr. Rushton, from the darker side. "I like to know what the young people think. It is they who will have it all in their hands one day."

"But thank heaven they will have changed their minds before that time."

This was from Miss Southwood, who emphasised her exclamation by getting up to sweep off into the fire-place a few crumbs from her grey velveteen gown.

"Do you think it is a good thing they should have changed their minds? It seems to me rather a pity. That is why we never have anything new. We all fall into the same jog-trot about the same age."

"The new is always to be avoided. Don't tell

me about jog-trot—I wish I were half as sensible as my mother."

"And so do I, Ellen," said Mrs. Stone, taking up the discussion in her own manner with that soft little half blow to begin with. Nobody could tell whether it was directed at her sister, or was an echo of her wish, not even Lucy, who knew her so well, and who stood between her and Mrs. Rushton listening to their talk, but without any impulse on her own part to rush into it as Katie would have done. Katie in the meantime had got out of that graver circle. She had given the large baritone his cup of tea, and now was holding the cake-basket while he selected a piece. Katie was in the light, so much light as there was. She was a fair-haired girl, with just the touch of warmth and colour that Lucy wanted—a little gold in her hair, a deeper blue in her eyes, a tinge of rose on her cheeks: and she had a far warmer sense of fun than Lucy, who would have carried the cake-basket quite demurely without any smile.

"I hope you will not think this is my fault,"

Mrs. Stone's nephew said in a low tone. "I am bound to obey, as I suppose everyone is here; otherwise I should not sit still and allow myself to be served; it is not my way, I assure you. And I keep you standing so long. I cannot make up my mind which piece to take. This has the most plums, but that is the larger piece. It always turns out so in this life; I wonder if you have found that out in your experience, or if things are better managed here."

"We are not supposed to have any experience at school," said Katie demurely. It was pretty to see her holding the cake-basket. And the rest of the company was occupied with their own conversation. Besides, how was he to know which of them was the heiress?

"We met you on the Common just now with your friend. It is not a very amusing walk, but it is better than going out in procession, I suppose. Does my aunt make you do that? is it part of a young lady's education, as cricket is of a man's?"

"Yes," said Katie. "We are trained to put

up with everything that is disagreeable, just as boys are trained to everything that is pleasant.”

“Do you think cricket then so pleasant?”

“Not to me—but I suppose it is to boys; and boating and everything of the kind. On our side we are taught quite differently. If there is anything more tiresome than another, more tedious, less likely to please us, that is what we are made to do.”

“My poor aunt! is she a tyrant then with her pupils? She is not a tyrant for her relations; or at least a very charming, delightful tyrant.”

“I did not mean Mrs. Stone; she is very kind—even to me; but I have been at other schools. I suppose it is for our good,” said Katie with a sigh, “everything that is very disagreeable is for our good; though I wonder sometimes why the boys should not have a little trial of the same—for I suppose they too have got to put up with things that are disagreeable in their life.”

“We are supposed,” said the baritone, who was becoming quite visible to her, enthroned in his Chippendale chair, “to have most of the disagreeables of life, while you ladies ‘who dwell at home at ease’——”

“Ah!” cried Katie, setting down the cake-basket, “if you would but quote correctly. The man who wrote the song knew a great deal better. It is the gentlemen who live at home at ease. ‘To all you ladies now on land,’ is what he says; he knew better. We don’t go out to sea like him, but we go through just as much on land, you may be sure,” cried the girl, with a sudden flush coming over her face; “it was not to us he said, ‘How little do you think upon the dangers of the seas.’ I have got a little brother a sailor,” she added half under her breath.

“I have evidently chosen my illustration badly,” said the other with prompt good-humour and a sympathetic tone. “If you have a little brother, I have a big one at sea, so here is something to fraternize upon. Mine is the captain of

a big merchantman, an old salt, and does not mind the dangers of the sea."

"Ah, but mine is a little middy," said Katie, with a smile in her eyes and a tear trembling behind it, "he minds a great deal. He does not like it at all. And mamma and I feel the wind go through and through us whenever it blows."

"I see," said the gentleman, "these are the disagreeables of life you speak of—imaginary. Probably when he is in a gale you know nothing about it, and the winds that make you tremble have nothing to do with him; but these are very different, you must acknowledge, from real troubles."

Katie did not condescend to answer this speech. She gave him a look only, but that spoke volumes. The superiority of experience in it was beyond words. How could he know, a man, well dressed, and well off apparently, with a heavy gold chain to his watch, and handsome studs, how could he know one tithe of the troubles that had come her way in that poverty

which only those who know it can fathom? She withdrew behind the tea-table, just as Mrs. Stone called to her nephew,

“Frank,” she said. (“So he is Frank *too*,” said Katie to herself.) “I have not presented you to my young friends. Mr. Frank St. Clair, Miss Russell (I see you have made acquaintance already); and Miss Trevor. Lucy, do you remember I once told you of a boy who was to me what your little Jock is to you? There he stands,” for Frank had risen to bow to his new acquaintance, and stood with his back to the window, shutting out what little light there was.

“You were a very young aunt, certainly,” he said, “but I refuse to believe that Miss Trevor has anything to do with a second generation.”

“Youth does not matter in that respect,” said Mrs. Rushton. “I was an aunt when I was three. There are a great many younger aunts than Lucy; but, as it happens, it is a little brother we are thinking of. And *à propos*, my

dear, how *is* little Jock? has he gone to school? it must be time he were at school."

"When you are ready, Lucy," said Mr. Rushton, "I am going with you to see your father. Not to say a word against my good old friend Trevor, he is full of whims. Now what is his fancy about that child? He will not bring him up as you have been brought up, Lucy."

"Because he has nothing to do with the money," said Lucy simply. "Papa thinks that a very good reason. I wish you would persuade him, Mr. Rushton; I can't."

"And he tells you so!" said Mrs. Rushton, shaking her head, "he talks to you about your money, Lucy?"

"Oh, yes! a great deal," said Lucy. She spoke with perfect calm and composure, and they all looked at her with subdued admiration. Six pair of eyes thus turned to her in the partial gloom. An heiress! and not ashamed of it, nor excited by it—taking it so calmly. Sighs that were all but prayers burst from, at least,

three bosoms. Oh, that she but knew my Raymond! thought one; and, if Frank will but play his cards as he ought! breathed another; while Mr. St. Clair himself said within himself robustly and without any disguise—I wish I had it! There was no sentiment in the latter aspiration. Katie, for her part, looked across the tea-table at her friend with one of her sudden blushes, feeling her cheeks tingle. What were her feelings in respect to Lucy? In her case, the wonder and interest were dashed with contempt, yet warmed by affection. Katie thought she despised money—not the abuse of it, nor the pride of it—but itself. Her soft little lip curled (or, at least, she tried to make it curl) with disdain at this meretricious advantage. She had said a hundred times that Lucy would be a very nice girl, the nicest girl in the school, if it were not for that money. She looked at her with a kind of angry love—half disposed to cry out, in Lucy's defence, that she was far better than her fortune; and half to throw a gibe at her because she was rich. If they had been

alone, she would have done the latter. As it was, amid this party of people, with Mrs. Stone close by, and Miss Southwood's little dark eyes twinkling at her out of the shadows, Katie was prudent and said nothing at all. As for Lucy, she did not in the least perceive the covetousness, which—in some instances, so mingled with other feelings that its baseness was scarcely visible—flamed in the eyes of the irreproachable people who surrounded her. Mrs. Rushton was a kind, good woman, who would not have harmed a fly. Mrs. Stone was better even, she was high-minded, generous in her way. And yet they both devoured Lucy in their thoughts—gave her over to the destroyer. How fortunate that she never suspected them as she stood there tranquilly between the two, acknowledging that she knew a great deal about her money. Mrs. Rushton was still shaking her head at that avowal.

“ My dear,” she was saying, and with perfect sincerity, “ you must not let it turn your head. Money can do a great deal, but there are many

things it cannot do. It cannot make you happy—or good."

"Lucy is good in spite of it," Mrs. Stone said, she too in all sincerity; "and I don't think she lets her mind dwell upon it. But it is a very equivocal advantage for a girl," she added with a sigh.

All this Frank St. Clair listened to with a grin upon his good-looking countenance. What humbugs! he said to himself—not being capable of understanding that these women were much more interesting as well as more dangerous in not being humbugs at all. He, for his part, waited for an opportunity of making himself agreeable to the little heiress in perfect good faith—*brutalement* as the French say. He wanted to please her frankly for her fortune's sake. Not that he could have been unkind to her, had he happened to strike her fancy, or would waste her fortune, or do anything unbecoming an honest Englishman. But an honest Englishman, with a light purse, may surely look after a girl with money without compromising his cha-

racter. When he asked her to marry him, he would not let her see that her money had anything to do with it. He would fall in love with her as a matter of course. It is not difficult to fall in love with a pretty young girl of seventeen. Well, perhaps, not strictly pretty—not nearly so pretty, for example, as that little Poverty by her side, the foil to her wealth; but still very presentable, and not unattractive in her own simple person. Thus the cautious eyes that surrounded Lucy, the hearts that beat with eagerness to entrap and seize her, did not recognise themselves as inflamed by evil passions. They were aware, perhaps, that a little casuistry would be necessary to make the outer world aware of the innocence of their intentions, but there was no aspect of the case in which they could not prove that innocence to themselves.

When the hour of tea was over, Mr. Rushton walked home with Lucy to see his old friend. John Trevor was not Mr. Rushton's equal, nor did he treat him as such. The old schoolmaster had taught him arithmetic, that neglected branch of

education, thirty or forty years ago, before he went to the public school, where it was not taught; and the prosperous lawyer, who was Town-clerk, and one of the principal men in Farafield, had always shown a great regard for his old master. “I should never have known more than two times two but for you, Trevor,” he would say, patting the old man on the shoulder, not very respectful, yet with genuine kindness. He went into the blue and white drawing-room, and seated himself in front of the fire, and talked for an hour to old Trevor, liberating Lucy, who hurried away to Mrs. Ford’s parlour, and with enviable confidence in her digestion had another cup of tea to please Jock, who had been watching for her eagerly from the window. Then she was made to sit down in a creaking basket-work chair beside the fire and tell him stories. Mrs. Ford’s parlour was not æsthetic, like that of Mrs. Stone; but its horsehair and mahogany furniture produced an effect not much unlike. Mrs. Ford, in a black arm-chair, was elevated as high above the heads of the younger people as if she

had been seated in a genuine Chippendale chair. And she crossed her hands on her black silk apron, and sitting back in the shadow, listened well pleased, but half in a drowse of comfort to Lucy's stories. She had a little rest in her own person when Lucy stepped into the breach. Though Mrs. Ford was not at all certain that Lucy's stories were Sunday stories worthy of the name.

Old Trevor had the will spread out before him when Mr. Rushton entered—not adding to it, however, which he would have certainly disapproved of as improper Sunday work—but reading it over, sometimes aloud, sometimes under his breath, sometimes with mutterings of criticism. He pushed it away as his visitor entered, and rose tottering to welcome him.

“Always going on with it, always going on with it,” the new-comer said, shaking his hand.

“Yes, I always go on with it,” cried old Trevor with a chuckle, “It's my *magnum opus*, Mr. Rushton. I add a bit most days, and on Sunday I read over my handiwork, and study

how I can mend it. I have put you in," he added with a great many nods of his head.

"What, for a legacy, Trevor?" said Mr. Rushton with an easy laugh.

"For a legacy if you like," said old Trevor, "though I don't suppose a hundred pounds would be much to you. No, not for money; but for the care of my girl, who is money. Ford downstairs is always dinging into my ears that somebody will marry her for her fortune. I hope Lucy has more sense; but still, in case of anything happening, I want her to have friends to advise her."

"Oh, I will advise her," said Mr. Rushton lightly, "though I think perhaps my wife would do it better. Fortune-hunters, yes, there are always fortune-hunters after an heiress. Your best plan would be to choose some one for her yourself, and get her married off in your lifetime, Trevor. Lucy is a good girl, and would content herself with her father's choice."

"Do you think so?" said the old man with a gleam of pleasure, "but no, no," he added, "I

am not in the same world that Lucy will be in. I couldn't choose for her; and besides she's only seventeen, and I'm not long for this world."

"Seventeen is not too young to be married; and you're hale and hearty, my old friend," said his visitor, once more slapping him on the shoulder. This demonstration of friendliness was almost too much for old Trevor, standing up feebly on his trembling old legs in honour of this distinguished acquaintance. He shook his head, but the voice was shaken out of him, and he was not capable of any further reply. When, however, Mr. Rushton encountered Ford outside at the gateway of the Terrace he took a much less jovial tone. "I hope he has got everything signed and sealed," he said, "and all his affairs in order; these papers he is always pottering over—codicils I suppose—you should get them signed too and made an end of. He is not long for this world, as he himself says."

"I don't see much difference," said Ford with that eagerness, half sorrow for the impending event, half impatience to have it over, which

even the most affectionate of friends often feel in spite of themselves, in respect to a long anticipated, often retarded ending. "But then I see him every day. Do you really think—"

"You should see that everything is settled and in order," said the lawyer as he walked away.

CHAPTER XII.

FATHER AND DAUGHTER.

“ **A**ND so Christopher went away to look for the great strong man that King Maximus was afraid of ; but I forgot, his name was not Christopher then, but only Offero, a heathen ; you know what a heathen is, Jock.”

“ I should think I did know ; but go on, go on with the story ; I never read this in any book.”

“ Well ! Then Christopher wandered about everywhere over all the country asking for the strong man. He did not know whether it was a giant like himself, or a King like Maximus, or what it was ; but he went over the seas and

up among the hills and into all the towns, looking for him."

"That is far too like a fairy tale for a Sunday," said Mrs. Ford, sitting behind in her big arm-chair. "My dear, if he had gone to the chief people in the country, the mayors of the towns, or the authorities, they would soon have told him—that is if he knew his name: and even in a fairy tale few people are so stupid as to set out in search of anyone without knowing his name."

Mrs. Ford was a trifle, just a trifle jealous. Lucy was not at all in the habit of interfering with her prerogative; but she did not like it, The "Pilgrim's Progress" she felt was much better entertainment on a Sunday night for any child.

"Oh, but this was not a person that the mayors and the magistrates knew. Listen, Jock, his name was Satan—now do you know who that great strong man was?"

"I thought as much, and it's all an allegory," said Jock, who was *blasé*, and tired of parables.

“I like a story best when it doesn’t mean anything; but go on, Lucy, all the same.”

“I don’t think it’s an allegory. Katie Russell read it out of a book about the Saints. I believe it is a true story, only very, very long ago; many things happened long ago that don’t happen now. I don’t suppose the Queen has a big giant like Christopher in all her armies; but still there was once a Christopher, Jock.”

Jock accepted the explanation with a little wave of his hand. He was glad, very glad, especially on Sunday, of anything new, but at the same time he was critical, and at the first suggestion of an allegory stood on his guard.

“Well,” said Lucy, resuming, “when Christopher had wandered about for a long time he met with a band of knights and their servants, travelling about as they used to do in those days, and at their head there was one all in black armour with a helmet covering his head and his face.”

“You mean, I suppose,” said Jock somewhat cynically, “with his visor down.”

“I suppose so,” said Lucy, a little confused, “but you know I am not so clever about these things as you are. I am afraid you don’t care about my story, Jock.”

“Oh, yes, I care about it; but unless there were enemies about, and he was afraid, he never would have had his visor down; and if he were afraid Christopher would have known he couldn’t be much; but I like your story all the same,” Jock added with great politeness; and he liked the *rôle* of critic, which was novel, too.

“He did not want to show his face,” said Lucy considerably cowed, “because if people had seen him it would have been known what kind of a being he was, and he looked a very great prince with all his followers round him. So when Christopher heard that this was Satan, he went to him and offered his service; and he was one of his soldiers for a long time, I can’t tell how long; but he did not like it at all, Jock, they did so many cruel things. At last one day, one very hot day in summer, they were all marching along, and there were two roads to the place

where they were going ; one road led through a wood, and that was a pleasant shady way, and the other was the high road, which was dusty and scorching and not a bit of shelter ; and you may suppose how astonished Christopher was when the captain refused to go by the pleasant way, though it was the shortest too.”

“ What was that for ? ” said Jock, excited mildly by an incident which he had not foreseen.

“ He would not tell for a long time ; first he said it was one thing and then another, but none of these reasons was the true one. At last Christopher so pressed and pressed that he got into a passion and it all came out. ‘ You great big blundering stupid giant,’ he cried, ‘ don’t you know there is a cross in the wood ? ’ But Christopher did not know what the cross meant ; and then the black knight was obliged to tell him that he dared not pass the cross—because of One,” here Lucy’s voice sank into reverential tones, “ who had been crucified upon it, and had won the battle, and had made even that dreadful

black Spirit, that cruel Satan, tremble and fly."

Jock was impressed too, and there was a little pause, and in the ruddy twilight round the fire the two young creatures looked solemnly at each other; and a faint sound, something between a sigh and a sob, came from kind Mrs. Ford, over their heads, who was much touched and weeping-ripe at the turn, to her so unexpected, which the story had taken.

"And what did he do then?" asked Jock, not without awe.

"Oh, Jock! he dashed his great big fist in the black captain's face and shouted out, 'I knew you were a coward, you are so cruel. The man who hung upon the cross, he is my master. I will go and seek him till I die.' "

Then there was another little pause—Lucy, too, in the excitement of her story-telling, having got a lump in her throat—and Mrs. Ford sobbed once more for pleasure.

"It is a beautiful story," she said; "I am very glad that the poor giant is going to be converted at the last."

“Ah, but now comes the difficult part,” said Jock, “how was he to find Him? It was only a wooden image that was upon that cross; he might seek and seek, like the Knights in the ‘Morte d’Arthur,’ but how was he to find Him? that is what I want to know.”

“Lucy, my dear, I think your papa wants you,” said Ford, coming in at this point, a little more uneasy than usual, by dint of Mr. Rushton’s warning. “He is sitting all alone, and he has just had his gas lighted.” He came out to the door of the parlour to wait for her, as she rose and disengaged herself from her little brother, who caught her dress to detain her. Ford, at the door, put his hand on Lucy’s arm. “Do you think he has been looking worse? don’t let me frighten you, Lucy, but can you see any appearance as if he were sinking?”

“Do you mean papa? No,” cried Lucy, with a start of alarm. “Is he ill? I will go to him directly. What is the matter?”

He had talked to her so much of his death that the girl’s heart leapt into the excited throb-

bing which accompanies every great rallying of the forces of nature. All her strength might be required now, at once, without preparation. Her throat grew dry, and the blood rushed to her face.

“Oh, I don’t think there is anything more than ordinary,” said Ford; “but Mr. Rushton thought him looking bad. He gave me a fright! and then of course, my dear, at his time of life—”

Lucy drew her arm away, and went softly upstairs. Many daughters before now have had to smooth the way before a dying father, and there was nothing required of her in this way that was above her strength; but it was not with her in other things as with others. She was aware how great the change was which would open upon her, the moment this aged life had reached its term; and all the strange unknown conditions which would surround her. It was not possible for Lucy to thrust away the thought, and comfort herself with indefinite hopes. For years her thoughts had been directed to the catas-

trophe which was to be so momentous for her ; she had never been allowed to ignore it. Her heart still beat loudly at the thought of that which might be coming now—which certainly must come before long. Her father was the centre of all her present living—beyond him lay the unknown ; but when she went upstairs he was sitting quite cheerfully, as he had been sitting any time these ten years—almost since ever Lucy could remember, in his arm-chair, neither paler nor sadder, nor with any tragical symptoms in him, looking over, with the same air of satisfaction, the same large manuscripts in which, with his own small neat handwriting, he had written down his whole mind. He looked up as she came in, and gave her his usual little nod of welcome ; and Lucy's heart immediately settled down into its usual calm. She took her usual seat beside him. All was as it had been for years in the familiar room ; it was not, however, the familiar room which took any character from its inmates—or rather perhaps it embodied too entirely the character of its old master, who

required nothing except his chimney-corner, and had no eye or taste for those niceties which reign in a lady's sitting-room, even when not a Queen Anne parlour of the newest old-fashion, like that of Mrs. Stone. Lucy had never been used to anything else, yet it repressed all emotion in her when she came into this un-emotional place. Die! why should anyone ever die? Would not to-day be as yesterday for ever, and every hour the same?

"I have had Rushton here," said the old man; "how fat that man is getting at his age! I don't suppose he is fifty yet. I am glad I am not one of the fat kind, Lucy; it must be such a trouble. And to think I remember him a slim boy, not much higher than you are. Hasn't he got a son?"

"Yes, papa; Raymond. I used to play with him when I was little. He is quite grown up now. Mrs. Rushton was telling me about him—"

"Take my advice, Lucy," said her father, interrupting her; "and don't, however it may be

pressed upon you, marry a man out of Farafield. Plenty will try for you—very likely Raymond himself. I thought there was something in Rushton's eye—it was that made me think of it. Don't marry a man from here. There's nothing but paltry sort of people here."

"Yes, papa ;" said Lucy, calmly. She had given a great many other promises on this question of her marriage, with the same composure. There was no excitement in her own mind about the question. She did not care what pledges she gave. Her father, who was not without humour, perceived this, and fixed his eyes upon her with his usual chuckle.

"Yes, papa !" he said, mimicking her small voice. "Anything for a quiet life ; you would promise me not to marry the Mayor, or to marry the Bishop, if I asked you, just in the same tone."

"No, papa ; I will promise *not* to marry anybody you choose to mention ; but the other thing would be more difficult. In the first place I don't know the Bishop," she added, with a smile.

“That is all very well,” said the old man; “but don’t you know, Lucy, that in a year or two your mind may change on that subject? You might fall in love, not with the Bishop, but why not with Raymond Rushton, or any other boy about the place? And this is what I want to say to you, my dear. Don’t! That is to say, keep them at a distance, Lucy. Don’t let them come near enough to get hold of you. Take my word for it, though they may be nice enough in their way, Farafield people are small. They are petty people. They don’t know the world; and you, with your fortune, my dear, you belong to the world, not to a little place like this.”

“But you have lived all your life in Farafield?”

“Oh yes; that is quite true. And I am just the same kind; petty, that is the word, Lucy,—small. That is why I am living like this, making no change till it all comes into your hands. Living in a grand house, spending a deal of money, would go against me—I should not like it. I should grudge every penny—I

should say to myself, you old fool, John Trevor ! what do you mean by spending all this upon yourself ? I couldn't do it. Carriages and horses and a number of servants would be the death of me."

"I don't think I shall like them any better, papa ; and if it is waste for you, it would also be waste for me."

"Not at all, not at all," he said ; "you have been brought up to it ; and it will be your duty, for property has duties, Lucy. It is just as necessary that you should spend a great deal on your living, and keep up a great show, as it is that you should give a great deal to the poor."

"But why then, papa, if you think that, am I to live here with the Fords, who do not understand anything of the kind, half of the year?"

"Aha, Lucy!" he said, "that is just my principle, you know ; that is what you don't understand as yet. You are to live with Lady Randolph and the Fords, six months each, for—unless you can get them all to consent to let you marry somebody before that time—as long as you are a girl, my dear ;—this is

the very crown of my plan, Lucy, without which the other would not be good for much," he said, rubbing his hands with satisfaction, and pausing to tantalize her. As it was Sunday, Lucy had not her knitting, so that she had nothing to do but to look at him, with perfect placid composure as usual, showing no scrap of excitement.

"Do you mean it is to be only for a time, papa?"

"For—seven years," he said; "seven years from the time of my death. It is to be hoped that my death will not be very long of coming, or you will be too old to enjoy your freedom. But there is not much fear of that; even if you were thirty before it came, thirty is the finest time of life. You know a great deal by that time; you are not so easily taken in, and you are still fresh and in all your glory. Never mind if fools begin to call you an old maid; a woman is not an old maid at thirty, she is at her best. She can pick and choose, especially when she has a fortune like yours. And by that time you will have got out of the young set—the ballroom set; you will

have learned to know people of importance. Yes," he said, chuckling; "that is the crown of my plan for you, Lucy—for seven years you will be under a little restraint; Mrs. Ford on one hand, Lady Randolph on the other, two people, I flatter myself, just as unlike as can be; and all the men that have a chance will be after you; but none of them will be able to marry you without the consent, you know," he went on chuckling once more, "of all these people; which I confess, Lucy, I take to be next to impossible. And then, my dear—then: in seven years complete freedom—freedom to do whatever you like—to marry whom you like—to be your own guardian—your own adviser. It is worth waiting for, Lucy—well worth waiting for. What a prospect!" cried the old man, in an ecstacy; "a well-trained mind used to control, an inexhaustible fortune, nothing to do but to pick and choose among the best people, and still under thirty years of age! By that time you will have learned to be content with nothing less than the best."

Nothing could be more curious than the pleased

excitement of the old man, looking forward to this climax of mortal felicity which he had carefully arranged for his child; and the perfect calm of the child herself, who neither realised nor appreciated that blessedness. She said, after a while, with a soft little sigh, which was half weariness and half a sense of the dreariness of the prospect,

“I should think it would be very nice—for a man, papa.”

“For a man! nonsense, Lucy; that is just an old-fashioned notion. A woman who is thirty, and has a great fortune, and is free to please herself, is as good as any man.”

This was not exactly Lucy’s point of view, but she had no gift for argument. She thought it was time to take refuge in a little harmless gossip, which was the only thing that now and then gave her the possibility of an escape from the will.

“Mrs. Stone has a visitor,” she said, “a gentleman come to see her. Mademoiselle thinks it very wrong to have a gentleman where there are

so many girls. He is Mrs. Stone's nephew ; his name is Mr. Frank St. Clair. It is quite a pretty name, isn't it, papa ? and he is good-looking, though Katie says it is the barber's block style. How I know is, that Katie and I went to Mrs. Stone's parlour to tea. She never asks more than two girls on Sunday, and it shows she is pleased with you when she asks you. We all like to be asked to the parlour to tea."

"Ah!" said old Trevor. He laughed and looked at Lucy with a great many nods of his grey head. "Mrs. Stone is generally pleased with *you*, eh, Lucy ? She is a sensible woman ; she knows what's what, as well as anyone, I know. And so she has had her nephew down *already*. She is a clever woman, a prompt woman. I have a great opinion of Mrs. Stone."

"Do you know him, then," said Lucy, with a little surprise. "She said she was going to bring him to call. She said she could not pretend to entertain him at the White House, which, is given up to education, and that it would be

nice for him to be able to come and talk to you."

At this Mr. Trevor chuckled more and more; he rubbed his hands with glee.

"She is quite capable of it," he cried, delighted, "quite capable of it. She is a clever woman, Lucy. I have always had a great admiration for Mrs. Stone."

"Capable of what?" said Lucy, almost angry. She, for her part, had a great admiration for Mrs. Stone. She had a girl's belief in, and loyalty to the elder woman, who yet was not too old to be out of sympathy with girls. She admired her mature beauty, her dress, everything about her, and to hear Mrs. Stone laughed at was painful to Lucy. It affected that *esprit de corps* which is next to self-regard, or sometimes even goes before it. She felt her own moral standing involved when anyone questioned, or seemed to question, the superiority of her leader. It was almost the only occasion on which any latent gleam of temper came to Lucy's mild eyes.

Mr. Trevor laughed again.

“You don’t understand it, my dear,” he said, “it’s a joke between Mrs. Stone and me. She is capable of making me a party to my own defeat,” he said, with a new series of chuckles, “of bringing me into the conspiracy against myself. That’s what I call clever, Lucy: Oh, she’s a very able woman! but let us hope this time she won’t be so successful as she deserves. Forewarned is fore-armed; I know now what I’ve got to look forward to, and I hope she won’t find me an easy prey, my dear, thanks to you.”

“I cannot in the least tell what you mean, papa,” said Lucy, with dignity, “and if it is anything against Mrs. Stone, I don’t want to know; and I hope she will be successful, whatever she wishes to do—though I don’t know what it is,” the girl added, with a vehemence quite unusual to her. It brought the colour to her usually pale cheek. She got up from her chair with angry haste. “I am going to get ready for dinner,” she said, “and if I have said anything

to set you against Mrs. Stone, I did not mean it, and I am very sorry. It must be my fault, for I am quite sure there is nothing wrong in anything *she* wants to do."

It was as if Lucy flounced out of the room, so different was it from her usual calm, though even now her demeanour was quiet enough. But her father was not much affected by the girl's vehemence. He sat looking after her and chuckled, watching her grey gown whisk—nay, almost whisk—the word was too violent to be employed to any movement of Lucy's; round the corner of the big screen, and thought to himself how wise he had been, and how clever in choosing an instructress for Lucy of whom she thought so well. Mrs. Stone's design, which he thought he had found out, amused and, indeed, pleased him too. He liked to see that this fortune, of which he thought so much, produced a corresponding effect upon others, and, indeed, would have been disappointed if there had been nobody "after" it during his lifetime. This was the first, and he chuckled over the advent

of the suitor, whom he determined to play and amuse himself with. That Mrs. Stone should have begun to scheme already did not displease, rather flattered him, especially as it gave him a fresh evidence of his own penetration in finding her out, and confidence in his own power of baffling her. Another man might have been taken in, but not he. There he sat complacent, while Lucy changed her grey gown for a blue one.

All these habits and customs of a life more refined than his own, the old man had done his best to train his daughter into. For a time, he had even gone so far as to put himself into an evening coat for Lucy's sake, but increasing weakness had persuaded him to give up that penitential ceremony. Still he exacted, vigorously and religiously, that she should dress for dinner, and would indeed have made her come down with bare shoulders every evening to the homely meal, but for the interference of Mrs. Stone, who had declared it "old fashioned" with

great energy, to the complete annihilation of poor old Trevor, who had thought himself certain of this important special feature of high life.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE LAST CLAUSE.

IT is not to be supposed that in the *tête-à-tête* dinner that followed, Lucy was set free from the interminable subject of that fortune which occupied all her father's thoughts. The idea of perfect freedom in seven years had but newly dawned upon him—though, as soon as he had thought of it, he felt it to be, as he had said, the natural crown of his plan, and climax of his thoughts. Up to the moment the great idea had dawned upon him, there had been a little sense of imperfection in his plans. They were elaborate preparations for—nothing. But now he had seized the end

to which all the preparations led. Neither the Fords nor Lady Randolph could be expected to live for ever in order to keep Lucy under subjection, nor would she always be under the superintendence of the matrimonial committee. The absurdity became apparent to the framer of the scheme just as he found the deliverance from it. And now that the climax had been attained, all the parts fell into due subordination. Restraint until she had fully tried all the preliminaries of life and learned to estimate the worth of time; and then full freedom and the control of herself and all that belonged to her. It seemed to old Trevor, as he thought it over, a beautiful scheme; to-morrow he would put fully on record these last stipulations, and when that was done there would be no more to do but to gather his garments round him and go out of the way. It must not be supposed, however, that any real idea of getting out of the way was in the old man's mind. He could not doubt that somehow he would still be in the midst of it, though he professed

to be quite sure of dying and passing into another life; that was a matter of course—but when he rubbed his hands with satisfaction over the completeness of his plans, there was no feeling in his mind that completeness involved conclusion. On the contrary, he seemed to see the prospect widening out before him. He enjoyed in anticipation not only the admirable wisdom of all his own stipulations, but even the amusing complications to which they would give birth; and then with a thrill of pride and satisfaction looked forward to the time of her freedom and happy reign, and power of self-disposal, nor ever once said to himself, “I shall be out of it all—what will it be to me?”

However, Mr. Trevor’s mind was so full of this new idea that he could do nothing but show, over and over again, how beautifully it fitted in with every previous arrangement, and how naturally everything led up to this.

“Of course,” he said, “to keep you under

control all your days was what I never thought, my dear. What I intended all along was to train you to a right use of your liberty. Only when you are able to bear the burden, Lucy—when you have seen a great many fancies drop off, and a great deal that you have believed in fail you, and when you have learned to know what is the best."

"Do you think that is so hard, papa?" said Lucy quietly, yet with a faint half-gleam of a smile. No doubt it was natural that at his age he should make "a fuss" about everything Lucy felt, though she was so sensible that, of course, she would choose nothing but the best.

"Yes, it is very hard," said the old man, "one tries a great many things before one comes to that. "A good-looking fellow, perhaps, for a lover, or a nice-mannered girl for a friend—till you find out that they are naught, neither one, nor the other, and that you have got to begin again; that's the way of the world. Then perhaps you will choose some others quite different, and they will cheat you too. You get a little more and a little

more experience at every step, and then at the end you will find somebody, as I found poor Lucilla, that is really the best."

Lucy looked up at him aghast. The idea made her tremble; first one bad and then another, and at last a Lucilla who would die, and be in her turn succeeded by another, who was not the best. This gave the girl a shudder.

"I would rather put up with the bad ones," she cried, "if I am fond of them, than go from one to another; it is horrible what you are saying, papa."

"Well, perhaps it is," said old Trevor, "life's not so very beautiful, whatever you may think just now; but what I am saying is right, that is one thing I am certain of. You may content yourself with what's inferior if you like, Lucy; but you can't expect any encouragement from me——"

She looked at him with a little alarm in her eyes. "It would be better to have nothing to do with anybody, to live all alone by one's-self, and never care for anybody——" she cried.

“Many people do that,” said old Trevor, “but I don’t approve of it Lucy. Take example by me. I had seen a many before I saw your mother, but I never had got any satisfaction to my mind till I met with Lucilla. I used to say to myself, this one won’t do, and that one won’t do. You see I kept my wits about me, and my head clear. Now that’s the plan you must go upon, both with friends, and with a husband if you marry. You don’t need to marry unless you like—I don’t say one thing or the other—you are to please yourself. But don’t take the first that comes, don’t take anyone till you’ve tried him and tested him. And the same with your friends—take ‘em, and leave ‘em, and choose again till you have found the best.”

“It is horrible, papa!” cried Lucy almost with tears.

Then, though she was not an imaginative girl, there suddenly came across her mind the story which she had been telling to little Jock. She had denied stoutly that it was an allegory, as Jock’s more experienced imagination had at once

feared; but there was something in the course of this conversation which chimed in with it, which brought it to her mind. Just so had the giant in that story sought his strongest and greatest. The end of the tale which she had not told to Jock was very incomprehensible to Lucy herself. She had not understood it when it was "read out loud," but it did not trouble her mind much. She thought it would do for a story to tell Jock, that was all. Now she thought of it again as she sat over the almonds and raisins opposite to her father and listened to him, and shrank from the map of life which he opened out before her. His revelations went up to just about the same point as the story she had told to Jock. And after that came the incomprehensible part, how to discern the best, how to get to the acquaintance of the mysterious conqueror of all. Jock had said that was the difficult bit. In the story it was all a confusion to Lucy, and she could not understand it at all.

While she was thinking thus, her father was

talking on, but she had lost a good deal of what he was saying when she suddenly came to herself again, and began to hear him as if his voice came out of a mist.

“ And when that has happened once or twice,” old Trevor was saying. “ You get sharp, oh, you get sharp! you are up to their devices—you cannot be taken in any more.”

“ You speak as if everybody tried to take you in, papa.”

“ Very near everybody,” said old Trevor, grinning, with a chuckle, “ not all, I don’t say all—but very near; and the hard thing is to find out the ones that don’t want to take you in. That is a thing which you have to learn by experience, Lucy. First you trust everybody—than you trust nobody; but after a while the sight comes back to your eyes, and you know who to trust. That is about the best lesson you can have in this world. I was over fifty before I met with your mother; that is to say, I had known her when we were younger, but I had not given any attention to her, not having learned then to dis-

criminate. We saw a deal of each other for two years before we married—so you see I was a long time before I got hold of my best, and yet I did get it at the end."

Lucy was disturbed out of her usual composure by all this alarming and discouraging talk, and she was slightly irritated, she could scarcely have told why, by all she had heard about her mother. She could not avoid a little retaliation. "But afterwards," she said, "after—when poor mamma died—was that the best too?"

He had been discoursing as from a pulpit upon his own wisdom and success, and received this thrust full in his face with astonishment that was comic. After the first confusion of surprise, old Trevor laughed and chuckled himself out of breath. "You have me there," he said, "Lucy, you have me there. I have not got a word to say. We won't say anything on the subject at all, my dear. I told you before that was a mistake."

But he was half flattered, half amused by this return blow. During the rest of the evening, he

would drop into ceaseless chuckles, recalling the sudden boldness of the assault. A man of many wives is always more flattered than disconcerted by any allusion to his successes. It was a mistake, but still he was not ashamed of his achievement. When, however, he had taken his glass of port, which had more effect upon him than usual in his growing weakness, the old man grew penitential. "It was a great mistake," he said again, "and I can't help wondering, now and then, how Lucilla will take it. She was a very considerate person; but there are things that the best of women can't be expected to put up with. I will confess to you, Lucy, that it makes me a little uneasy sometimes. Oh, yes! it was a mistake."

Lucy had been quite re-assured when she had joined her father in the afternoon after Ford's warning, and had seen no difference in his looks; but before the evening was over, a vague uneasiness had crept over her. He talked more than usual and sat longer than usual before he could be persuaded to go to bed. And now and

then there was something disjointed in his talk. He stopped short in the middle of a sentence, and forgot to finish it. He introduced one subject into the midst of another. He gave her the same advice several times over. After a while she ceased to notice what he was saying altogether, out of anxiety about him. He was not like himself; but he would not allow her to leave him. He was more intent on having her companionship than she had ever known him. "Don't go away," he said, when she did but stir in her chair. As she sat and looked at him, having no knitting (as it was Sunday), the spectacle of the feeble old figure, garrulous, holding forth from his chair, scarcely waiting for a reply, struck the girl as if she had seen it for the first time. His old cheeks were suffused with a feverish red, his eyes were gleaming, his head had a tremble in it, his lean old hand, so often used to emphasize what he said, shook when he held it up. There are moments when the aspects of a familiar figure change to us, when we see it as strangers see it, but with a still keener

insight, perceiving, in a moment, the wreck which we may have seen without seeing it, falling into decay for years. This was the revelation which all at once came upon Lucy. She had seen nothing unusual about him a few hours ago —now, quite suddenly, she came to see him as Mr. Rushton had seen him, as he appeared to strangers; but in a guise so much the more alarming as it concerned her much more closely. She held her breath as this revelation flashed upon her, feeling as if she must cry out and call for help, she who was so composed and unexcitable. It seemed to Lucy, in her sudden alarm and ignorance, that he might die before her eyes.

This, of course, was an entirely false alarm. Next morning he was exactly like himself again, no special feebleness in his aspect, and much energy in his mind. As soon as he got settled in his chair, Mr. Trevor got his big manuscript out, took a fresh pen which Ford had mended for him, and began to work with great energy and pleasure. Never had he more enjoyed his work;

he was putting on the corner stone—finishing the fabric. It took him all the morning to put everything down as he had planned it. And it pleased him so much that he smiled and chuckled to himself as he wrote, and said special phrases over and over under his breath. All the morning through, he sat at his table working at it—while little Jock occupied his habitual position stretched out upon the white rug before the fire, his shoulders raised a little, his head bent over his book. Jock was too much absorbed to be aware of anything that was going on. The book he had lighted upon that day was Defoe's "History of the Plague," and the little fellow was altogether given over to its weird fascinations. It was more entrancing even than "Robinson Crusoe." Thus the child and the old man kept each other company for hours together; the one betraying his presence occasionally by a little flicker of two small blue legs from the white rug, and of the pages of his book, itself half buried in the silky whiteness; while the other chuckled and muttered as he wrote, delighted with himself

and his latest conception. They were both living by the imagination, though in phases so different; the boy carried out of himself, lost in the wonderful dream-history which was so much more real than anything else around him: the old man throwing himself forward into a future he should never see, enacting a dream life, which was to be when his should be ended and over—but which in its visionary distance was also a thousand times more real than the dull day to which it gave a fictitious charm.

When the clause was finished, Mr. Trevor once more called up Ford, and made him acquainted with his new conception. Ford studied him attentively while he read it, but he also listened with benevolent attention; and he gave his approval to the new plan. Seven years! Ford was just about so much the junior of his friend and patron. He said to himself, as he listened, that by that time he would no longer care to have the responsibility of superintending Lucy's actions; and he graciously concurred in the expediency of her liberation. “If she cannot

manage her own affairs at thirty or so, she never will," he said, "and I think, Mr. Trevor, that you're in the right."

"If I go soon," said the old man, "she'll be five-and-twenty, and no more; and I think I'll go soon; but nobody can answer for a year or two. Yes, I think it's a pretty will as it stands; I don't think, without any partiality, that you'll find many like it. There's nothing that can happen to her, so far as human insight goes, that I have not foreseen and left directions for. I hope I have not been insensible to my responsibilities, Ford. I've tried to be father and mother both. If you can point out anything that I've neglected—"

"Mr. Trevor," said the other; "you've thought of a many more things than would ever have come into my head. You've discharged your duties nobly; and I and Susan will do our part. You need not be afraid; we'll take your example for our guide, and we'll do our part."

"Just so, just so," said the old man, not so much interested. It was essential, no doubt,

that his will should be carried out; but he did not realize so clearly, and perhaps he did not wish to realize, that he would himself have no hand in carrying it out. When the question was put as to how the Fords were to do their part, his attention flagged. "You are not to be the first, you know," he said, brusquely; "there's my Lady Randolph that comes first."

Here Ford began to shake his head. "If you took my opinion, I'd say that was the one weak point," he said; "I make bold to say it, though I know you will be offended, Mr. Trevor. That's the weak point. It's well intended, very well intended; but that's the weak point."

"You blockhead!" said the other; but he kept his temper. "You would keep her in Far-a-field all her life, I shouldn't wonder, and have all the little cads in the place after her! and never let her have a glimpse of the world."

"I don't know what you call the world," said Ford. "Human nature is the same everywhere. We are just the same lot wherever you take us—

and as for cads there's Sir Thomas —. I thank the Lord I don't know anybody in Farafield—nobody in my own class of life—that has been so tiresome, that has been as wild—”

“ You let Sir Thomas alone,” said old Trevor ; “ he never was a cad.”

Upon which Ford continued to shake his head. “ It may be a word that I don't fathom,” he said ; “ I don't know one in Farafield that has given as much trouble ; and he's always in want of money ; it's like putting the lamb into the clutches of the wolf.”

“ There are plenty of wolves,” said the old man. “ That's my policy ; I set one to fight the other, and I wish them joy of it. One here and one there, that's better than a single candidate. And while they're pulling each other to pieces, my little lamb will get off scot-free.”

Ford shook his head persistently, till it seemed doubtful if it ever would recover its steadiness. “ If I were to speak my mind,” he said ; “ there's one that has a real claim—just one. He's maybe too modest to speak for him-

self; but there *is* one, if I were to speak my mind—”

“Then don’t!” said old Trevor, with a fiercer gleam in his eyes; “that’s my advice to you, Richard Ford. Don’t! I want to hear nothing of your one that has a claim. Who has any claim? not a soul in the world! Lucy’s fortune is her own—she’s obliged to nobody for it. It comes to her, not from me, that I should take upon me to pick and choose. She does not get a penny from me; all I have I’ve given to the other, and a very good nest egg too for his position in life. But Lucy’s fortune is none of my making; Lucy is Lucilla’s daughter.”

“Susan’s cousin!” said Ford, instinctively. He regretted it the next moment; but he could not withhold this protest. To think that all the money should be Lucilla’s, and none of it come to Susan, though she was Lucilla’s cousin! It is hard, it must be allowed, to see fortunes come so near, yet have no share in them. In the family; yet not yours, not the smallest bit yours, save by grace and favour of a stranger, a man who

is your cousin's husband, indeed, but has no claim otherwise to belong to the family. The Fords were not at all ungrateful to old Trevor ; but still there were moments when this struck them in spite of themselves.

CHAPTER XIV.

A FALSE ALARM.

THE prophets of evil were not deceived ; when a kind of general impression arises in respect to an invalid that a crisis is approaching, it almost always is justified by the event. During that very night there was a sudden alarm ; Mr. Trevor's bell rang loudly, awakening all the house. Lucy flew from her room, hastily gathering her dressing-gown round her, with her light hair hanging about her shoulders, and Mrs. Ford appeared in a night-cap, which was an indecorum she recollects long afterwards. The maids naturally, being less interested, were harder to rouse, and it was Mr. Ford himself who issued

forth in the penetrating chill of the early morning, still quite dark and silent, not a soul astir, and buttoning himself into his warmest overcoat, went out in the cold to seek a doctor, who, for his part, was just as unwilling to be roused out of his slumbers in the middle of the night. Jock, roused by the sounds, sat up in his little bed, with wide-awake eyes, hearing the bell still jar and tinkle, and sounds of people running up and downstairs, which half frightened, half re-assured him. To hear other people moving about is always a comfort to a child, and so was the reflection of the lamp at the gateway of the Terrace, which shone into his room and kept it light. Jock sat up and gazed with big eyes, and wondered, but was too much awed and alarmed by the nocturnal disturbance to move; and, indeed, as it turned out after, there was not much need for anyone to be disturbed. Old Trevor's explanation was that he had woken up with a loud singing in his ears, and sense of giddiness, and he could not articulate at first, when they rushed to his bedside, so that every-

body believed it to be a “stroke.” But when the doctor came he declared that, though the patient’s blood was running like a river in flood, yet that there was nothing very particular the matter, and that a day or two’s quiet would make him all right. Mrs. Ford, in her night-cap, remained by the newly-lighted fire in Mr. Trevor’s room to take care of him; but the rest were all sent back to bed, and when the breakfast hour arrived the patient pronounced himself as well as ever. He got up at his usual hour, and would not even allow that, as Mrs. Ford suggested, he felt “shaky.”

“Not a bit shaky,” he declared, putting out one shrunken shank to show how steadily he stood on the other; “but I thought my time was come,” he said. “I’ll allow I thought I had reached it, after looking for it so long. It was a queer feeling. I am just as well pleased to put it off a bit, though it must come soon.”

“That is true,” Ford said, shaking his head; “we must all die; but the youngest may

go off before the oldest, as happens every day."

These were the words that little Jock heard as they came into the drawing-room, the old man leaning on the arm of the other. Where was the youngest to go off to? He understood vaguely, and a momentary thrill ran through his little veins. Was it he that might "go" before his father? it was a thing which seemed to lie between the eldest and the youngest. Jock's mind was full of the plague and all its horrible details, and the wonder and mystery of thus going "off" chimed in with this gloomy yet fascinating study; the recollection of the bell tinkling through the streets, the dead-cart stopping at the door, scared yet excited him. But there was no plague, no dead-cart, no tinkling bell at Farafield. After a while the impression died out of the child's mind, but scarcely so quickly as it did out of the mind of his old father, who already chuckled to himself over the fright he had given the house. Mr. Trevor did justice to the people who surrounded him.

“When it really comes they will be sorry,” he said; “but it was a disappointment.”

He liked to think he had disappointed them; even in getting better, a man cannot but feel that his own superior sense and strength of character have something to do with it. Another man would not have rallied, would have been capable of dying, perhaps, and cutting short all the interest of his story; but not John Trevor, who knew better what he was about.

The night-alarm, however, soon became known over Farafield, and many people had sufficient interest in the old man and his daughter to come, or send, and make inquiries. Among these he had one visitor who amused and one who angered him. The first was a stranger, who sent up a card with the name of Mr. Frank St. Clair, and a message from Mrs. Stone, who begged to have the last news of the sufferer. “Show him up, show him up,” old Trevor said, his keen eyes twinkling with malice and humour; but when the large figure of the young barrister (for that was Mr. Frank St. Clair’s profession)

entered the room, the old man was impressed, in spite of himself, by the solidity and imposing proportions of Mrs. Stone's nephew and candidate; there was an air of respectability about him which compelled attention. He was handsome, but he was also serious, and had that air of a man who has given hostages to society, which nothing confers so surely as this tendency to a comfortable and respectable fulness of frame. Old Trevor acknowledged to himself that this was no young dandy, but a man, possibly, of weight of character as well as person; his very tendency (to speak politely) to *embonpoint* conciliated the old man. Schemers are seldom fat Mr. Frank St. Clair looked respectable to the tips of his well-brushed boots, and, as he looked at him, old Trevor was mollified in spite of himself.

“Yes, I gave them a fright,” he said. “I thought myself that matters were coming to a crisis; but it was a false alarm. You may tell your aunt that I am as well as ever, and as clear in my intellects as ever—such intellects as I have.”

“ Nobody would doubt that, I think,” said St. Clair; and indeed Mr. Trevor flattered himself that nobody could doubt it. He was as clearly aware of the effect upon a stranger of his own keen eyes and vivacious wide-awake aspect as any one could be.

“ There’s no telling,” said the old man; “ some people think they can take me in—which is a mistake, Mr. St. Clair—a great mistake.”

“ I should think so,” said St. Clair, with easy composure. “ If you will let me, I will sit down,” he said; “ if there is nothing to occupy you for the moment, I wonder if you will let me ask your advice about a little money I have?”

Again the malicious gleam awoke in old Trevor’s eyes, a mixture of suspicion, admiration, and interest moved him. Every man who had money interested him more or less; but if this was a dodge on Mrs. Stone’s part, the move was one which might have filled any like-minded artist with admiration. He chuckled as he invited the confidence of his visitor—yet though he

thought he saw through the deceit, he respected St. Clair all the same for having money to invest, even if it were not his own, but lent to him for the occasion ; it threw a halo of interest round him in old Trevor's eyes.

“ So that's the first of them,” he said to himself, when St. Clair took his departure ; “ that's number one of the pack. Women are quick about it, they don't let the grass grow under their feet. Rushton will keep quiet, he won't let his lad show in my sight. But the women are bold—they're always bold. And I wonder who my lady will bring forward ? ” The old man laughed ; he was pleased by the thought of the coming struggle. It did not give him any concern that his young daughter should be left alone in the midst of it, to be competed for by so many hungry aspirants. “ I'd like to be there to see the wolves at it,” he said aloud, with a grin on his face.

At the sound of the voice over his head, little Jock turned round upon his rug. Wolves were in his way ; from Red Riding-hood upwards, he

knew a great deal about them ; he had heard them in the forests pursuing the travellers, and knew what the howl meant when it occurred in a story in the midst of the black winter night. He turned right round, with the "History of the Plague" in his arms, and faced his father looking upward from the rug. "What is it about wolves?" said Jock.

No question could have surprised old Trevor more ; he looked round him first in suspicion, to see where the voice came from, then looked down upon the child with a gape of wonder. "Eh ! do you know anything about wolves, my lad?" he said.

"Oh, a great deal!" said Jock, calmly ; "I could tell you heaps of stories about them ; the worst of all is that one about the woman and her children. I told it to Lucy, and she would not let me tell it out. Would you like me to tell it to you?"

Jock spoke to his father on very much the footing of an equal. They did not as a rule take much notice of each other ; but the curious way

in which they pursued their lives together had given the old man and the little boy a sort of tacit fellowship, not at all like the usual relation between father and child. Not once in two or three months was there any conversation between them, and this gave all the more importance to their occasional intercourse. “There was once a woman,” said Jock, “travelling though a wild, wild forest, and she had her three little children with her—quite little, little things, littler than me a great deal; when all of a sudden she heard pad, pad, something coming behind her! It wasn’t quite night, but it was getting dark, darker and darker every moment; and the old white horse got awfully frightened, and the forest was miles and miles long: She knew she couldn’t come to a village, or a house, for ever so long. And she heard them coming on faster and faster; sniffing and panting, and all after her, hundreds and hundreds of them; they’re like dogs you know,” said Jock, parenthetically, looking up from the rug, where he lay on his back, with the “History of the Plague” laid open on

his breast ; “they bark and they howl, just like dogs, when you hear them far off in the woods ; but when they’re after you, they go straight before them, like the wind blowing, and never make any sound.”

“And what became of the woman and the children ?” said old Trevor, partly amused, partly impressed.

“The white horse* galloped on and on,” said Jock, with the instinct of a story-teller ; “and the wolves came after pad, pad, all like one, though there were hundreds and hundreds of them, and the woman in the sleigh (did I tell you it was a sleigh ? but I don’t know rightly myself what a sleigh is), got wild with fright, and the three little things cried, and the trees made a noise against the sky ; and the wood got deeper and deeper, and the night darker and darker ; and then she heard them all panting behind her, and their breath hot upon her, and

* The poem of Ivan Ivanovitch had not been written in those days, and perhaps it might have been above Jock’s understanding.

every moment she thought they would jump up behind and crunch her with their teeth—”

“ Go on, child, go on ; ” said old Trevor. “ I think I’ve heard the story ; but I don’t remember how she got out of it.”

“ This is what Lucy will never listen to, ” said Jock, solemnly ; “ she says it can’t be true ; she says there never was a woman like that. She says she’ll beat me if I go on ; but it is the real end to the story all the same. Well, you know, the woman was wild ; she didn’t know what she was doing. Just when they were going to crunch her with their teeth in her neck, she turned round, and she took up one of the children and flung it out into the middle of the wolves ; and the little thing gave just one more cry (he was crying, you know, before), and the wolves caught him in their big teeth, and tore him, one a piece here and another a piece there, hundreds and hundreds of them ; and the old white horse galloped on and on.

“ Well, but then that was only one, ” said Jock resuming after a pause, “ when they had eaten

that little thing all up, they were not half satisfied, and they said to each other ‘come on, and two minutes after, what should the woman hear, but the whole mob of them after her again, and the sound of them panting and their breaths on her neck. And she took hold of another little child——”

“ You needn’t tell me any more,” said the old man; “ where did you get these dreadful stories?—they turn one sick.”

“ She threw them all out, the first, and the second, and the third,” cried the boy making haste to complete his narrative, “ and then she was saved herself. Lucy never gets further than the first; but you’ve heard the second. And she says it can’t be true, but it is true,” said Jock severely, “ many people have told it. I’ve read another story——”

“ Hold your tongue, child,” said the old man.

Which Jock did at once. He was ready to come forward, to recount his experience, or instruct others by his large amount of miscel-

laneous reading whenever it was necessary, but he did not thrust his information upon unwilling ears. He turned round again promptly, and, laying his book down on the white rug, supported himself on his elbows and resumed his reading. Jock had a perfectly good conscience, and could hear any number of parables (though he was always suspicious of them) without turning a hair.

But old Trevor was not equally innocent ; he trembled a little within himself at that story of remorseless self-preservation. The wolves were the image he had himself used, and when he remembered that he had looked forward to their struggle with amusement, and indeed done his utmost to draw them together, without much regard for the lamb who was to escape as she could from their clutches, a momentary tremor of conscience came over him. But it did not last long ; impressions of this kind seldom do ; and when he received a second visit in the evening, this time from Philip Rainy, who expressed much solicitude about his health, old Trevor had ceased to feel any

compunctions about the fierce competition to which he was going to expose his child. But he was firmly determined that the first and most natural competitor, the man who was of the family, and had a sort of claim to everything that belonged to the name, should not be, so to speak, in the running at all.

“I am very well,” he said, “quite well, thank you; there is nothing the matter with me. If people say to the contrary they’re lying, or at the best they’re fools meddling in other folks’ affairs. It’s nothing to anyone if I’m ill or well.”

“You must pardon me, uncle,” said Philip, “but it is something to me.”

The familiar grin came upon the old man’s face: but it was not accompanied with a chuckle of not unkindly mirth, as it had been in the case of Mrs. Stone’s nephew, in whose favour there was no such potent argument.

“I don’t know what it should be to you,” he said, “Mr. Philip Rainy: if you had been waiting for my shoes I could have understood—

but you've got 'em, you've got 'em, more fool I ; and if you think there is anything more coming to you when I die, you're mistaken, that's all I've got to say. My will's made—and there's no legacies in it, not one. My money goes to them that have a right to it. There's no fancy items to satisfy those that have gone out of their way, or thought they'd gone out of their way, to flatter an old man. So that it's no good, no possible good, to take that friendly interest in me."

Lucy, who was sitting by when this was said, started and got up from her knitting, and went once more behind her father, where she stood looking pitifully at Philip, clasping her hands together, and imploring him with her eyes not to be angry. That would have been inducement enough to bear with the old man's brutal incivility, if there had been nothing more. He gave her a slight, almost imperceptible nod, re-assuring her, and answered with a calmness which did him infinite credit, and indeed cost him a great effort.

“I am sorry you think so badly of me,” he said, “but I will not defend myself. I am waiting for no old shoes, heaven knows. I should like to be of use to my relations—to you or to Lucy. But, if you will not let me, I must put up with it. And I will not stay longer now, since you have so poor an opinion of me. Good night, I am going away; but I shall not cease to think about you, though I do not see you. You have been very kind to me, substantially kind,” said Philip, rising slowly with a lingering look at the father and daughter, “I owe all that I am, and something of what I may be to you, and I want no more, Mr. Trevor, no legacies, nothing but a way of showing my gratitude. If I am not to be allowed to do this, why, I must submit. Good night.”

There was a quaver of real feeling in the young man’s voice. It was true enough, and if there was something more that was likewise true, the *suppressio veri* is in some cases a very venial fault. As for Lucy, what with sympathy and indignation and shame for her father’s conduct, she

was more tenderly inclined towards Philip than she had ever been in her life. Thus opposition usually works. She cast an indignant look at her father, and a strenuous protest in the shape of an exclamation: "Papa!" which spoke volumes; and then in spite of his call to her to remain, she followed Philip as he went downstairs, appealing to him also, in a different way, with the tears in her eyes.

"You will not mind, Philip; but please don't stop coming or quarrel because he is cross. He is ill, that is the reason, he is not himself; but I am sure you are too sensible to mind."

Philip shook his head with a smile. "I fear I am not so sensible," he said, "I do mind; but, Lucy, if you will always speak to me as kindly I shall not mind what anyone else may say," he added with fervour. He had never gone so far, or felt inclined to go so far before.

Lucy was surprised by this new tone, and looked at him, not with alarm, but with a mild astonishment. However, as it did not occur to her that there could be any special meaning in

it, she gave him her hand kindly as usual, nay, a little more kindly, in that her father had used him so badly.

“It does not matter very much about me,” she said, “but I am very, very sorry papa has been so—strange. It is only because he is ill, very ill still. They all think he is better, but I don’t think so; his hand is so hot and trembling, and there is such a wild sort of brightness in his eyes. I am not easy about him, but very unhappy. I wish to-night was over,” she said, the tears falling in a little shower from her eyes.

“Lucy! let me stay; will you let me stay? He need not know that I am here, but I could sit up downstairs and be ready to run for the doctor, or to do anything.”

“It is very good of you, Philip; but how would you be fit for your work if you sat up all night? No, no, I cannot let you do that. And perhaps it will not be so bad, perhaps I am —silly,” said Lucy, with a dolorous attempt at a smile.

“What does the doctor say?” Philip asked.

He was very sorry for her in all truth and sincerity, besides having a sense that it would be very good for him to be thus identified with her, and show himself as her chief comforter and support at this serious moment of her life.

Mrs. Ford came out from her parlour as she heard the conversation outside. She was Philip’s relation too, and she had decided that nothing could be more suitable, if——. But like so many other good women she could not let well alone, and to Philip’s great vexation here came out, adding her portly presence to the scene.

“The doctor is quite satisfied,” said Mrs. Ford, “*quite* satisfied. He is going on as nicely as possible; you must help me to persuade Lucy, Philip, that she must not sit up as she is talking of doing. Why should she sit up? I shall be there to do whatever is wanted, and to call her if it should be necessary. At her

age it is a killing thing to sit up all night."

"I have been begging her to let me stay and watch instead," said Philip; "a chair in your parlour would be all I should want, and I should be ready to run for the doctor."

"Oh, no, no," Lucy said.

Mrs. Ford wavered for a moment, thinking that a young man was much more fit for this duty than her respectable husband, but finally decided that it was not to be thought of, remembering Mr. Trevor's dislike to Philip; and then the bell was heard to ring, and Lucy ran upstairs anxiously. Mrs. Ford's parting words, however, were very encouraging.

"Don't you take any notice," she said, "but come and see her, whether you see him or not. He will go some day or other, that's certain, in one of these fits."

"Poor little Lucy!" Philip said.

"Yes, it is true, it will be sad for her," said Mrs. Ford, not half sure of what she was saying;

“ but yet Lucy will have a great deal to be thankful for, whatever happens,” she added, as she again bade him good-night.

CHAPTER XV.

THE SIGNING OF THE WILL.

AFTER this alarm, however, Mr. Trevor got better, and there was an interval of calm. Life resumed its usual routine, and all went on as before. During this interval, Frank St. Clair became Mr. Trevor's constant visitor. He saw the old man almost every day, and there can be no doubt that he entertained and amused him much. Old Trevor even went so far as to talk to him about the will, that all-important document, which was the object of his existence—not, indeed, of its actual composition, but of its existence as a mysterious authority which was to guide the steps of his successors for years.

They had a great many most interesting conversations about wills. Frank was not a great lawyer, but yet he could remember some cases which had made a noise in their day, and some which had kept families in great commotion and trouble without making much noise in the world ; and he took a somewhat malicious pleasure in telling his new acquaintance alarming stories of wills that had been lost, then found again to the confusion of every rational arrangement ; and of wills that had been suppressed, and of some which no one had paid any attention to, setting aside their stipulations entirely, almost before the testator was cold in his grave. This was very startling to old Trevor. He inquired into it with a wonderful look of anxiety on his face. There was one will, in particular, of which his informant told him, with malicious calm, in which there was question of a house which the testator had built for his daughter, and which he left to her under the condition that it should never be let or sold, but remain a home for her and her children for ever. What

had happened?—the house had been let directly, the daughter not finding it convenient to live there; and it was now about to be sold. Yes, the will was perfectly sound, not contested by anyone; had been proved in due form, and administered to, and all formalities fulfilled—except in this important particular of carrying it out. Old Trevor's throat grew dry as he listened, the colour went out of his face.

“But—but—but—” he said, “was it allowed—was it permitted? Why wasn’t it put a stop to? You must be making a mistake. Nobody can go against a will. A will! You forget what you’re saying—a will is part of the law.”

“Who was to put a stop to it?” said St. Clair calmly. “Who was to interfere? There were several brothers and sisters, and none of them wanted the house to stand empty though the father so willed it. Whose business was it to stand up for the will? There was no one to interfere.”

“That is the most wonderful thing I ever heard in my life. The most wonderful thing!”

said the old man, stammering and stumbling. “ I cannot understand it. A will—and they paid no attention to it. I never heard of such a thing in my life.”

“ Oh ! I have heard of a great many such things,” said St. Clair, and he gave a little sketch—which, indeed, was interesting—of careful testaments set aside by the law, or made null by some trifling omission, or solemnly ignored by the very heirs they appointed. It was a cruel joke. Poor old Trevor did not get over it for a long time. He sat and thought of it all the rest of the day. Who was to interfere ? who was to make sure that anybody would do as he had ordained—would take upon them the trouble of superintending all Lucy’s actions, and following out his code ? He had Ford up when St. Clair left, and talked to him long on the subject, not betraying his fears, but cunningly endeavouring to pledge him, over and over, to the carrying out of his views. “ You would not see my will neglected after I’m gone ? If the others should be careless, or refuse the

trouble, you'd always see justice done, Ford? I am sure I can trust in you whatever happens," the old man said.

"The best thing to do is to get the will signed, and sealed and delivered," said Ford, "that is the first way of making it sure. So long as you are adding a little bit every day, you can never be certain. Yes, yes! you may trust in me, Mr. Trevor. I would never dare to go against a dead person's will. I'd expect to be haunted every night of my life. You may trust in me; but I can't answer for others. I have charge of half of the time, no more. I can't answer for others;—Lady Randolph will pay little attention to me."

"Lady Randolph will pay attention to her own interests," said the old man.

"Ah! that she will," cried Ford with energy. There was much more meaning in the tone than in the words; and the inference was not agreeable to old Trevor, who retired within himself, and sat for the rest of the afternoon with a very serious face ruminating how to invent safeguards

for the will, which, however, he would not sign, as Ford suggested. "There's something more I want to put in," the old man said pettishly. "I'll try to wind it all up to-morrow." But as a matter of fact, he did not want to wind it all up, or conclude the document. When he did so, his occupation would be gone. It would be the conclusion of all things. With a natural shrinking he thrust this last action from him, notwithstanding the composure with which he had long regarded his own death as something necessary to the fulfilment of his intentions. But he did not feel disposed to put his final seal to it, and dismiss himself out of the world with a stroke of his pen. To-morrow was soon enough. When Lucy returned from school, she found him shivering by the fire. It was a cold day, but he was chilled by more than the weather; chilled in his vivacious spirit, which had done more to keep him warm than his good fire, or warmly lined dressing-gown. "No, I am not ill," he said, in answer to her inquiries, "not at all poorly, only low, Lucy. If you and the rest

should throw me overboard after I am gone! if it should turn out that I have taken all this trouble for nothing: thinking of you night and day, and planning for your good and your happiness. If it should be all for nothing, Lucy!"

"But how could that be," said Lucy with her usual calm, "when you have been so particular—when you have written it all down?"

"Yes, I have written it all down," he said, "and it can't come to nothing, if you will be a good girl, and take care that all your old father's wishes are carried out."

"Papa, I promise you, all you have arranged about me, and all your wishes for me, shall be carried out," said Lucy with a very slight emphasis upon the pronoun, which indicated a mental reservation; but her father did not notice this. His voice already enfeebled took a coaxing, beseeching tone.

"I'll not fear anything, I'll try not to fear anything, if you'll give me your promise. Give me your promise, Lucy," he said, and Lucy

repeated with more effusion, when she saw the feverish uneasiness in which he was, the promise she had already made.

“Except about Jock,” she said within herself; but even if she had said it aloud her father’s thoughts were too much bent on the general question to have remarked this. Ford, who was very anxious too, beckoned to her from behind the screen, and whispered, “Get him to sign it, ask him to sign it!” with the most energetic gesticulations; but how could Lucy press such a request upon her father? They were all anxious in the house that evening, and Mrs. Ford sat up all night, and her husband lay on the sofa in his clothes, fearing a midnight summons; but it was not till the next evening that the blow came. When their anxiety had been softened, and their precautions forgotten, the loud jar and tinkle of the bell once more woke little Jock in his little bed, and Ford from his comfortable slumbers; and this time it was no false alarm. Old Trevor was seized at last by the paralytic attack which had been hovering over him for

some time. Ford going hastily for the doctor caught a bronchitis which kept him in bed for a week (just, his wife said, like a man—when he is most wanted), but the old man had his death-stroke. The house changed all at once, as sudden and dangerous illness always changes the abode it dwells in. All thought, all consideration were merged in the sick-room. For the first few days not even the affairs which he had left unsettled were thought of. The poor chilly blue and white drawing-room in which he had spent his days, stood vacant, colder and more commonplace than ever, yet with a pathos in its nakedness. The blotting-book, with the big blue folio projecting on every side, still lay on the writing-table where it had lain so long ; but nobody touched it except the housemaid who dusted it daily, and was often tempted to take the sheaf of untidy papers to light her fire. What would it have mattered if she had lighted her fire with them ? The work upon which the old man had spent so much of his fading life was of little importance now. No one thought of it except Ford, who at the

worst of his bronchitis mourned over the uncompleted document.

“Will he ever come to himself, Doctor? Will he ever have the use of his faculties?” he moaned; but even this no one could tell.

The old man lay for more than a week in this state of unconsciousness; but after a time began to give faint indications of returning intelligence. He could not move nor speak, but his eyes regained a gleam of meaning, and very awful it was to see this re-awakening, and to guess at the desires and feelings that awoke dimly, coursing like lights and shadows, a dumb language upon his countenance. One night Lucy felt that his eyes were fixed upon her with more meaning than before, and the three anxious people gathered round the bed, questioning and consulting each other. He was like a prisoner, making faint half-distinguishable gestures beyond the bars of his prison, questions on which deliverance might depend, but which the watchers could not understand. Presently the efforts increased, the powerless ashy old hand

which lay on the coverlet, all the fingers in a helpless heap together, began to flicker in vague movement. Old Trevor's eyes had not been remarkable for any force of expression, for nothing indeed, save for the keenness of his seeing when he was well. They had been small and sharp, and of a reddish grey, with puckered eyelids, making them smaller than they were by nature. Now they seemed to stand out enlarged and clear, and full of a spiritual force, which was partly weakness and partly the feverish dumb impotence of a desire to which he could not give words. They all gathered closely round, as anxious and not less helpless than he. Lucy in her inexperience was driven desperate by this crisis. She knelt down by the bedside, speaking to him wildly, clasping her hands, and beseeching, "What is it? What is it? Oh, papa, what is it? Try and speak to me," she cried. This hopeless kind of interrogation went on for some time without any result, and they had all subsided again into the quietness of despair, when Lucy was suddenly enlightened by a movement

of the old man's crumpled fingers, which he had managed to curve as if holding a pen. "He wants to write," she said, hurrying to find a pencil and paper, but these were rejected by an indignant gleam from the sufferer's eyes.

"It is pen and ink he wants," Lucy cried in desperation, yet tidy still; "dear papa, this will be easier, and it will not make stains: not that! Oh, what is it, then, you want? what is it he wants? can no one guess what it is?"

"It is of no use," said Ford; "he wants to write, but he can't, that's the whole matter; he has something to tell us, but he can't. It's the will, he has never signed the will. Doctor, is he fit? would it be any good?"

The doctor had just come in, and stood shaking his head.

"Let him try," he said; "I suppose it can't do any harm, at least."

They thought they saw a softening of satisfaction in the patient's eyes, and Ford ran to get the papers, while they all gathered round, more

like conspirators about to drag some forced concession from the dying, than anxious attendants seeking every means of satisfying a last desire. Then the old man's lips began to move. To his own consciousness he was evidently demanding something, struggling, with his eyes almost bursting from his head. They raised him up, following the imperative demand made by his face, and put the familiar document before him. His eyes (they thought) brightened at the sight of it; something like a smile came upon his ashy and somewhat contorted countenance. Though he was supported like a log of wood by Ford and Lucy, yet his skeleton figure, raised erect, took an air of dominance and energy. He had reigned in a fantastic visionary world where everything was subject to his will when he had composed these papers, and something of the same sentiment was in his aspect now. He clutched the pen in that bundle of bony fingers, then gave a glance of triumph round upon them all, and dabbed down the pen upon the paper with that skeleton hand.

What had he put there? a blot, nothing more.

A perception that he had not succeeded, a gleam of anguish went over his face; and then grasping the pen with increased energy in a wildly renewed effort, he brought it down in a sea of ink, with a helpless daub as unmeaning as before. Then a groan came from his shrivelled bosom; he let the pen drop, and dropped himself like a log of wood.

The doctor had been standing by all the time, shaking his head; he interfered now in a passionless easy tone.

“There is no harm done,” he said; “it could not have stood had he succeeded; nobody could have said his mind was in a fit state. Don’t take it away, but wait and have patience. After this he may mend, most likely he will mend.”

“Papa,” cried Lucy, close to his ear, “do you hear that? You are not to mind, you will still be able to do it. Do you hear, papa?”

The old man made no response. Another groan, the very utterance of despair, broke from him. His eyes closed, his bony fingers fell on the coverlet, a collection of contracted joints, helpless as they had been before. He made a half fling of intended movement, without strength to carry his intention out. What he wanted was evidently to turn his head from the light, to turn the countenance to the wall; what image is there which speaks more eloquently of that despair which is moral death? The spectators stood by mournfully, with but half a sense of the full tragic meaning of the scene, yet vaguely impressed by it, feeling something of the horrible sense of failure, tragical, yet stupefying, which invaded all the half-awakened faculties of the chief sufferer. Even now they were but half aware of it, Lucy looking on with infinite pity and awe, struggling to assure the half-deafened ear that it did not matter, that all would be well, while the Fords, quickened by self-interest, realised with a dull dismay the loss, the misfortune, which would affect themselves. But the real tragedy

remained concentrated in that worn-out old body and imprisoned soul. How much of his life was in those elaborate plans and settlements! and he had failed at the last moment to give them the necessary warrant. The old man closed his eyes, and, so far as his will went, flung himself away from the light, turned his face to the wall, yet could not do even that, in the prostration of all his powers.

“If he can sleep, he may wake—himself;” the doctor said, doubtfully. It was just as likely he might not wake at all. But the light was carefully shaded, and the nurse, who had no anxiety to disturb her, and the calm of professional serenity to keep her composed, took the place of the other watchers. The doctor, who was interested in an unusual “case,” and who was a young man, as yet without much practice, offered to Ford, who was excited and worn out, to remain, that there might be help at hand, and a professional guarantee in case of any new incident; and this being settled, sent all the other watchers to rest. Lucy, though she would fain

have stayed with her father, fell asleep, how could she help it? after so many broken nights, the moment her young head touched the pillow. The Fords were more wakeful, and retired, more to consult together than to sleep, talking in whispers, though nothing they could have said on the upper floor could have reached the sick-room, and full of alarm and trouble as to the consequences of the failure. Mrs. Ford, for her part, employed this moment of relief chiefly in crying and mourning over “their luck,” which no doubt would be enough to secure that the old man should die without signing the charter of their privileges. But even the whispering and weeping came to an end at last, and all was still in the house, where the doctor occupied the forsaken drawing-room, so bare and chilly, and the nurse watched in the silent chamber, and old Trevor lay between life and death.

The only one of the family who could not rest was little Jock. Who does not remember that sleeplessness of childhood which is more desolate and more restless in its contradiction of nature,

and innocent vacancy, than even the maturer misery of wakeful nights all rustling full of care and thought? Jock had been waked out of his first sleep by the muffled coming and going, the sound of subdued steps and whispering voices. He had heard a great deal which "the family" are never supposed to hear. He heard the doctor's whispered conference with the Fords in the passage. "I can say nothing with certainty," the doctor had said; "if he can sleep he may be himself in the morning, and able to attend to his business." "Or he may pass away," Mr. Ford had said; "at the dawning. That is the time when they get their release." Pass away! Jock wondered, with a shiver, what it meant. Visions flitted before his eyes of his father's figure, like that of Time, which he had seen on an old almanack, his grey locks flying behind him, and a long staff in his hand. Where would he go to in the dark, or at the dawning? Jock tried to turn his face to the wall, away from the long mysterious window, which attracted his gaze in spite of himself, and through which he

almost expected to see some weird passenger step forth. His door was open, as he liked to have it, and the faint light shining through it usually afforded him a little consolation; but on this particular night, among its vague horrors, this too became a dangerous opening, through which some terrible figure might suddenly appear. He was obliged to turn round again, to keep both door and window within sight. And all kinds of visions flitted before him. The noise of a waggon far off on the road, across the Common, suggested the dead-cart of the Plague, rolling heavily, stopping here and there to take up its horrible load. He seemed to hear the bell tinkle, the heavy tramp of the attendants; and at any moment the child felt the door might be pushed open, and some one come to take him away, and toss him among all those confused limbs and dead faces. Or was it his father whom they would seize as he "passed away," with his grey hair blown about by the winds? Then Jock's imagination changed the theme, and he was in the valley of death with Christian, hearing all

those horrible whispers on every side, and looking into the mouth of Hell. He did everything he could to get to sleep ; he counted, as far as his knowledge of numbers would go, and said to himself all the poetry he knew ; but all was of no avail. When he began to see the walls of his little room grow more distinct round him in a faint blueness, Jock was not encouraged by the prospect of daybreak. He thought of what Mr. Ford had said, and of the people who were "released" at the dawning, and he could not bear it any longer ; he sprang from his bed, and rushed towards the light in the passage, a light which was more cheerful, more re-assuring, than the pale beginning of the day. The door of his father's room was ajar, and the light was burning within, and a faint glimmer as of firelight. Jock crept in, trembling and shivering, in his little white night-gown, like an incarnation of the white cold tremulous infantile day.

Jock stole in very quietly, feeling protection in the warmth and stillness ; he edged his way in the shadow of the curtains, drawing instinctively

towards the fire; but afraid of being seen and turned out again. He was afraid, yet he was very curious and anxious about the bed, in which he knew his father was lying. The curtains at the head were thrown back, twisted and pushed out of the way to give more air; and there the pale grey head of the old man revealed itself on the pillow, lying motionless. Jock stopped short with a sob in his throat, and terror, too intense for expression, in his soul. His father had not “passed away;” but whether he was alive or dead, Jock could not tell. The nurse was dozing in the stillness, in her chair by the fire. The day was rising, penetrating, even here, between the closed curtains, with that chill all-pervading blueness; it was the moment when every watch relaxes, when the strain is relieved, and weariness makes itself felt. Not a sound was to be heard, except now and then the ashes falling, and the breathing of the strange woman in the big chair, who was almost as alarming an object to Jock, as his father. The child stood shiver-

ing, his mouth half open to cry, the sob arrested by pure terror, in his throat.

And whether it was that the sob escaped un-awares, or that some sense of the presence of another living creature in the room, that subtle consciousness with which the atmosphere seems to penetrate itself, of a living and thinking soul in it—reached the old man on the bed it is impossible to say: but while Jock stood watching his father suddenly opened his eyes, and turned, ever so little, yet turned towards him. Jock was not aware that the old man had been up to this time unable to move, but his imagination was excited, and the instantaneous revival into awful life of the mute figure on the bed, produced the strangest effect upon him. A wild scream burst from his lips, he ran out to the stairs crying wildly. “He has got his release,” Jock cried, not knowing what he said.

The cry woke the nurse, brought the young doctor, drowsy and confused, from the next room, and Lucy flying, all her fair locks about her shoulders, downstairs. The Fords followed more

slowly, the very maids were roused. But the release which the old man had got was not of the kind anticipated by his companions. He was liberated from the disease, which nobody had hoped ; he had recovered his speech, though his utterance was greatly changed and impeded ; and, though one side remained powerless, he retained the use of the other. He was even so much himself as to chuckle feebly, but quietly, when the doctor returned a few hours later, and pronounced him to be almost miraculously better. “I’ll trouble you, Doctor, to witness it,” the old man said, babbling over the words, and looking with his enlarged but dimmed eyes at the papers by his bedside. “I’ve got something to add ; but I’ll not put off and cheat myself, not put off and cheat myself again.” This they thought was what he said. And thus the will got signed at last.

He lingered for some time after, continually endeavouring to resume his old work, and now and then becoming sufficiently articulate to give full evidence of the perfect possession of his faculties.

But within a week a third seizure carried off the old man without power of protest or remedy. His unexpressed intentions died with him, but the words "I've something to add," were the last he said.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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